

**DUE DATE SLIP****GOVT. COLLEGE, LIBRARY**

KOTA (Raj )

Students can retain library books only for two weeks at the most

BORROWER'S No	DUE DATE	SIGNATURE

**CULTURAL HISTORY  
OF  
THE MUSLIMS**



# **CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE MUSLIMS**



*Translated from the Russian  
by*

**SHAHID SUHRAWARDY**



**MITTAL PUBLICATIONS**  
**NEW DELHI 110 059 (INDIA)**

First Published in 1934  
Photographically Reproduced in 1986  
Reproduced again 1995

Published and Printed by K. M. Rai Mittal for Mittal Publications  
A 110 Mohan Garden New Delhi 110 059 (India)

## CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD                   ...                   ...	ix
TRANSLATOR'S NOTE                   ...                   ...	xiii
INTRODUCTION                   ...                   ...	xix

Definition of ' Mussulman ' and ' Arab ' Culture—The word East—The Near East and the Far East and their rôle in international cultural contacts—Contact among peoples the chief factor of progress

CHAPTER I                   ...                   ...	.
---	---

### *The Christian East and its Significance for Islam*

Christianity and its relation to the culture of Antiquity—The Roman Empire and Iran—Arab conquest and its consequences for the Christian World—Influence of Christians and the diffusion of Greek scholarship among the Arabs—Position of Christians in the Mussulman world—Relation of Eastern

Christians with Europe and the Europeans—  
Idea of Arab national renaissance and the  
union of Christian and Mussulman Arabs.

CHAPTER II                   ...                   ...                   24

*The Beginnings of the Caliphate and of  
Arab Culture.*

Arab campaigns of conquest and the  
spread of Arabic—Arab towns—Damascus  
and the Ommeyad mosque—Cairo and other  
towns—Influence of conquered cultured  
peoples—Concentration of cultural activity  
at Kufa and Basra

CHAPTER III                   ...                   ...                   42

*Bagdad and the Further Development of  
Arab Culture*

Bagdad and its significance for culture—  
Mussulman science of IX-Xth century—  
Level of education of the masses—Political  
life ; Samarra—Cultural activity in the  
Eastern and Western territories of the  
Caliphate—Ibn-Khaldun and the question  
of the decline of Arab culture

	Page.
CHAPTER IV . . . . .	70

*Persian Culture and its Influence on  
other Lands*

Persian nationalism and its renaissance under Islam—Aristocracy and popular movements—Development of town-life—Literature and Science—Samanids—Bunds—Firdausi—ibn-Sina—Biruni—Mussulman architecture in Persia—Unification of Mussulman Asia by the Seldjuks—Ismailites—Development of regionalism after the fall of the Seldjuk Empire—Sea-borne and land trade.

CHAPTER V . . . . .	109
---------------------	-----

*The Mongol Conquest and its Influence  
on Persian Culture*

Persia under the Mongols—Significance of Shiraz—Achievements in learning and development of town-life—Relation with China—The compilation of Rashid-ud-din—Persian culture and the Turki peoples—Timur and his descendants.

	Page.
CHAPTER VI      ...      ...      ...	134

*The Mussulman World after the  
XVth Century*

Political might of the Mussulman world and loss of cultural leadership—Cultural activity in the Mussulman world after XVth century—Causes of backwardness of Mussulman countries—Passage of cultural leadership to Europe and the importance of this fact for the history of Russia.

---



## FOREWORD

It seems to me that of all periods the present is most suited to the study of the history of cultures. The sudden changes that we have been witnessing in political and social life due to man's creative and destructive activities in recent times bear out the theory, long held by a certain class of historians, of a rhythm which governs the shifting of cultural centres from one country or one continent to another. The idea of nationalism based on the notion that ethnological units are best capable of finding the surest way of governing themselves, which apparently had been one of the most inspiring slogans of the Great War, has given place in some parts of the world to that of internationalism of the classes and in others of international collaboration. At no other time the interrelation of countries for political, economic and even cultural ends have been so emphasized. Therefore all attempts in history to transcend ethnological and political boundaries in the name of a great confederation are of special interest to us to-day. *The vast conglomeration of*

gathered to itself pilgrims from all the political units, must have served as a very important centre for the exchange and dissemination of these ideas. The torch that was held aloft in Spain to light up the darkness of the European Middle Ages cast its reflections on the waters of the Ganges and the Caspian Sea. Thus, a great international idea had succeeded, several centuries ago, to transmute a vast and various cultural and other material of Muslim and non Muslim contribution into one whole for its own specific purposes.

In this little book, translated by our University Professor of Fine Arts, the author has with remarkable brevity and erudition unfurled before our eyes the pageant of a great culture, and emphasized the interrelations amongst its protagonists in the sense that I have mentioned above. Many works have been written on Islamic culture but in none do we perceive to such an extent that cultural unity which pervaded the Islamic world. This is due to the fact that until now specific countries have been studied and almost exclusive emphasis has been laid on the contributions of the Arabs and the Persians alone. The rôle of Islam in Turkestan and the

peoples belonging to a dozen countries of the Old World which were united under Islam affords the imposing spectacle of how a leading idea can reform to its ends all seeming differences of outlook. It has often been contended that there has been no Islamic culture but a culture of the Islamic peoples, that is, those who had been converted to Islam brought with them their own cultural baggage and that historians have arbitrarily given a generic name to what were but particularist manifestations. Whilst one cannot doubt the contribution of each ethnical group, nor that all the peoples united under one religious idea from the Pyrenees to the Assam Hills contributed in an equal degree to Islamic culture, it is something apart and much greater than the culture of the various bodies of Mussulmans that participated in its creation, even as a corporation has a personality distinct from the members composing it. We now know sufficiently well that all parts of the Mussulman world were connected among themselves either through large empires including many countries or by religious movements or by travels and that there was always a quick interchange amongst the different territories of cultural values. Mecca, which yearly

Russian possessions is hardly known to us Professor Bartold, being an authority on these subjects with a worldwide reputation among Orientalists, gives us here many data. Within the pages of a small book covering the cultural life of a vast area and during many centuries, one could not but expect that the author would limit himself, as the translator notes, to suggesting many thoughts which he has not been able to complete because of the exigencies of space. A special interest attaches to his chapter on the Mongol invasion where he attempts to explode the theory that Islamic culture never recovered from the shattering blow dealt it by the Mongols at Bagdad in 1258 A D. I hear that elsewhere he has elaborated this idea with greater precision and adduced a greater quantity of data, but even in these outlines his theories appear to be convincing. In our days of detraction or of over-praise the sober objectivity of this work appears to me to be specially commendable.

*'Kashānā'*

CALCUTTA

1932

HASEAN SUHRAWARDY

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Vassily Vladimirovitch Bartold died in August, 1930, whilst he was working on the manuscript of an unknown Persian geographer of the Xth century. For many years during which he held the post of Professor of Islamic Studies in the Historico-philological Faculty of the Imperial University of St. Petersburg he was the greatest authority in Russia on the Mussulman world. He also belonged to the Russian Academy of Sciences, the membership of which used to be the highest distinction that a savant in his country could attain in the days when elections were not manoeuvred for political ends. During the last year of his life he was the Director of the newly founded Turcological Cabinet of the Academy.

Bartold has been known to continental Orientalists for the last twenty years as the greatest specialist on the history of Turkestan and generally on the migratory movements of the nomadic tribes, especially the Mongol and the Turk. His introduction to the English reading public dates from 1925 when his classical book on Turkestan with

much addition of new material was published in London for the Gibbs Memorial Series with an introduction by Sir E. Demison Ross. This book is certainly the greatest contribution made to the study of the spread and development of Islamic culture in a region which is comparatively unknown. During his connection with Turkestan which lasted for over thirty-five years he published several works on it and on the neighbouring countries beginning with *The Report on an Expedition in Central Asia, 1893-1894*, which was published in 1897 and ending with his latest books both published in the same year *History of the Cultural Life of Turkestan*, St. Petersburg, 1927, and *Historical Essay on the Kirgizi*, Frunze 1927. From 1898-

1913 appeared his *Turkestan at the Time of the Mongol Invasion* which was the book later translated into English in a revised form. In 1914 he published at St. Petersburg *The History of Irrigation in Turkestan*, in 1918 *Ulugbek and His Time* and *Essay on the History of the Turkomans* and, in 1926 at Baku, an illuminating work with a valuable bibliography on the state of our present knowledge of the Turki peoples and the ends that should be pursued in the study of their history.

Though Bartold was chiefly engaged in unraveling the history of the Mongols and the Turks, which was of more immediate interest to his countrymen and for which he was eminently equipped because of his knowledge of Mongol, Turki and Chinese, his scholarship was not limited to that portion of the Mussulman world. As far as Turcology is concerned Russia possesses a glorious list of scholars who had preceded him. He was an Arabist and an Iranist of no mean distinction. Besides he knew the Caucasian languages which had hitherto not been made use of for investigation by Western European Orientalists. With Arabic, Persian, old and new, and Chinese he possessed all the languages of "the three countries which had been traversed by the hoofs of Mongol war horses." In 1903 he published at St. Petersburg his capital work, *A Historico geographical Review of Iran*, which for the wealth of information about the monuments of Persia and the activities of the Ilkhans is unique. In 1925 at St. Petersburg he re-edited his famous *History of the Study of the East in Europe and Russia* (containing an appendix dealing with the Chinese Orientalists) in which he gathered all the notices and observations about the East, principally about

the Islamic countries, from the ancient times till the present, and which reminds one in more than one respect of those comprehensive bibliographical compilations so usual during the Mussulman Middle Ages. Bartold was not specially interested in the spread of Islam in European Russia, but in dealing with Turkestan he could not neglect this part of Central Asian activity and gave a brilliant account of the religious, diplomatic and cultural relations existing between the different parts of Islamic Russia in a work published at Tiflis in 1926, *Caucasus, Turkestan and the Volga*.

The little book on Mussulman culture which is now presented is one of a pair of popular works published in 1918 at St. Petersburg in the series, "The Circle of Knowledge," the other being an exposition of the religious doctrines of Islam. Here in a succinct and almost cryptic form he has attempted the survey of the entire field of Mussulman culture and tried to explain those cultural interrelations which had existed between the territories of the Mussulman world. In his works he had always insisted on the importance of international contacts, of the world trade-routes, and on the significance of social factors, industry,



“agriculture and the historico-geographical “conjunctures” for the study of history. In this book, too, he has tried to apply this method. The language of the text is rather unusual. Bartold was always negligent of his style and except for *Turkestan* which was rewritten with a view to translation, often sacrificed clarity to conciseness and restraint. Burdened as he always was with an incomparable wealth of material usually derived from unpublished sources, he had a peculiar elliptical manner of constructing his sentences in involutions, using often the same word several times, which contrasts with the habit of other Russian writers. This is especially the case with the present work which was meant more to suggest than to elucidate historical phenomena. This book is based on his lecture-notes to which he had been making additions during a long career of professorship, and if sufficient care is not taken it is often possible to miss the logical connection between one sentence and the next. The translator has been hard put to reconcile the necessity that he felt for clearness of expression with a sense of *pietà* towards the written words of a teacher.

## INTRODUCTION

Usually " Mussulman " or " Arab " is the adjective employed to qualify the culture of the Middle Ages in what is called " the East." This culture, however, was not wholly created by the followers of Islam nor by the Arabs. The only fact that can be affirmed is that those peoples of Hither Asia and of Africa, who, during a long period, played the leading rôle in culture after it had been lost to Europe, were united under Islam, and that the Arabic tongue was their common language for the expression of thought.

The word " East " when used in the history of cultures does not always entirely correspond with the geographical position of the countries which are described as lying in that direction. For example, in relation to Russia, the cultured provinces of Hither Asia stand towards the south. In the same way though Northern Africa, as a part of the Mussulman world, is described as " East," it is really situated towards the south of Western Europe.

The idea of the " East " as a world apart and opposed to the " West " originated during the Roman Empire. The Greeks contrasted the warm cultured South with the North which, according to them, was populated by warlike barbarians, and it was this idea which formed the basis of their original division of the world. They placed Europe to the north of Africa and along the top of the whole length of Asia. Had Siberia been known to them they would have included it in Europe. According to Aristotle the population of the world, with the exception of the Greeks, was divided into the barbarians of Northern Europe, who were courageous but incapable of political and cultural development, and the Asiatics, who were cultured but devoid of manliness. The central position was occupied by the Hellenes who lived in a land where the climatic conditions were favourable both to the development of culture and the preservation of manliness. Consequently it was they who were predestined to be the masters of the universe. To a certain extent Aristotle's dream was realised by his pupil Alexander. His victories subjected Hither Asia and Egypt to the political and cultural influence of the Hellenes and gave birth to the so-called Hellenistic cultural world where

the influence of Asia over the Greeks, especially in political life, was often more marked than that of the other side. Nevertheless, the leadership in culture remained with the Greeks even after they had lost their political hegemony, i.e., after the Parthians from the East under the Arsacids had gradually pushed the Macedonians and the Hellenes to the other side of the Euphrates and the Romans from the West had step by step conquered the rest of Alexander's empire.

Rome subjected Egypt to her cultural influence and gave the lie to Aristotle's idea that the European peoples, with the exception of the Greeks, were incapable of cultural development. Roman geographers situated Europe not towards the north but towards the west of Asia. Strabon (1st century A.D.) considered the physico-geographical and climatic characteristics of Europe favourable to culture, but insisted upon the exclusively advantageous geographical position of Italy, which, as it were, had forced on Rome her world rôle. It was due to Rome that the superiority of Europe over Asia in the sphere of law, technique and warfare was established in the same way as her leadership in science and the arts had been due to the Greeks. The words "East" and "West"

had, however, a different significance for the Romans. "East" (*Oriens*) included in administrative terminology all the parts of the late empire under Alexander beginning with the Balkan Peninsula. The Graeco-Roman world was considered by the Romans to constitute a whole. An educated Roman had to know "both" the languages, that is, Latin and Greek. Sometimes the word "East" also stood for those parts of the Parthian Empire, which lay outside the sphere of Roman domination. Strabo thought that the ultimate subjection of the Parthians by the Romans was an event which would be realised in the near future. Tacitus, who wrote a century later, was not so hopeful, but he was convinced that "the subjugated East" was less a danger to Roman supremacy than were the Germanic tribes. 'the love of freedom of the Germans was more terrible than the Kingdom of Arsaces' It so happened, however, that long before the invasion of Rome by the Germans, a blow was struck at her might from the East. In the IIIrd century the weakened 'Kingdom of Arsaces' gave place to that of the Sassanians. As far back as the IVth century the Romans were driven from the Caspian Sea which they had reached under

Pompey. Iran under the Sassanians again became the mighty rival of Rome and dominated the land and sea routes of world trade which lead to China and India. The cultural leadership which then passed from Europe to Hither Asia became ultimately confirmed during the Mussulman period.

Under the influence of Christianity, Islam and later on of Humanism, the significance of the word "East" again changed for the Europeans. Knowledge of one of the Eastern languages became a necessary part of a European's education. St Jerome said of himself that he knew Hebrew, Greek and Latin. During the Middle Ages the history of Europe and Hither Asia was considered as forming part of one and the same territory. The conception, which prevailed in Europe till the XVIIIth century, of the four successive world empires—Assyro-Babylonian, Persian, Graeco-Macedonian and Roman—was derived from the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament. For all times the world significance of Rome, a term which until the schism included Constantinople, the second Rome, was never doubted. Whatever contradicted this idea was regarded as transitory or illegitimate. It was religion which first marked

the cleavage between Europe and the non-Christian (later the non-Catholic) East. Humanism carried back this distinction to the pre-Christian past. When the habit, which had gained currency during the XVIIth century, of dividing the history of the world into ancient, mediaeval and modern, had been established, the word "East" was considered to mean a geographical entity apart, which, in antiquity, had remained outside the influence of Graeco-Roman civilization in the same way as it was now standing outside the influence of its renaissance. For those, who adhered to this division, not only ancient but world history itself began with the Greeks. Even after the historical researches of the XIXth century there have been classical philologists, who have claimed that the history of Greece should be treated as the continuation of the history of the Ancient East.

To the majority of historians it is now known that the history of Greece had been preceded by a continuous and composite culture in Hither Asia and Egypt and that this culture, similar to that of the Greeks, was not the product of the genius of any one people but was shaped under the influence of ever-increasing international contacts. It is in

this sense that the Russian historian \* of the "Ancient East" understands the term to mean the space which stretches from the Caucasus and Central Asia to the Indian Ocean as well as the lands which lie around the African lakes and between the boundaries of Iran and India to the Strait of Gibraltar. According to him the Ancient History of these lands "constitutes an entirely complete whole."

It will be noticed that in this interpretation of the "History of the East" as a part of world history, the history of the real Eastern countries of the Old World, such as India and China is not included. The term "Far East" † has been suggested by some historians for these countries. They have noted that the history of the "Far East" presents a picture of cultural development wholly independent of the West, whereas the

\* Professor B. A. Turaeff. *Istoria Drevnyago Vostoka*, Petersburg, 1913-15 —Tr

† The Author employs the Russian term "*Dalny Vostok*" (lit. Far East) to include what we know as the Far East as well as India. In this he follows the fashion of all Russian and some Continental historians (cf. the use of the term "*l'Extrême-Orient*")—Tr.



culture of Europe and the "Near East" is taken to be derived from identical principles. They contend that a knowledge of the history of the "Far East" can supply us with material which will enable us to verify and supplement those historical laws which have been deduced from a study of the history of the West. Though it is now proved that even in ancient times India was under the cultural influence of Hither Asia (the origin of the Sanskrit alphabet is derived from this source) \* and that China was under the influence of India, the "Far East" should be regarded as a special cultural entity farther removed from the "Near East" than the latter is from the Graeco Roman world. Notwithstanding extraneous influences and catastrophic invasions there was never an interruption of cultural traditions either in India or China. As to the "Near East" we know that European scholars had to discover the key in order to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics and Assyrian and Persian cuneiform script.

The very unsettledness of life of the western part of the Old World as compared to the eastern

\* Recent researches have proved this view to be no longer tenable —Tr

part contributed to assign to the former that rôle which in all times has been played by her. In relation to the "Far East" the word "West" is used in its largest sense including Hither Asia, Northern Africa and Europe. In the course of time domination of the trade routes has passed from the peoples of Hither Asia to the Europeans and vice versa, but at every period, from the days of the Phœnician navigators till now, it is the Western peoples who have possessed the gift for this kind of initiative. We do not find in history instances of Indians or the Chinese having consciously striven to gain possession of the foreign trade of Western countries or to impose upon them their economic or political systems.

At the present moment one might take for granted the doctrine that the chief factor in progress has always been the contact among peoples. The development and decadence of peoples can neither be explained by racial characteristics nor religious beliefs, nor even by natural environments. They are to be determined by the place that in the different periods of their history these peoples have occupied in such contacts. Whatever might be the racial superiority of the Indo-Europeans over other peoples, without these contacts they would have

remained savages like the Lithuanians till the XIIIth century or the Kaffirs of the Hindukush. In the same way whatever advantages might be adduced in favour of Christianity as compared to Islam the culture of the Mussulman world was higher than that of the Christians as long as the former held in their hands the chief trade routes of the world trade. Also, whatever superiority might be claimed for the climatic and physico geographical conditions of Europe as compared with the other parts of the world, Europeans began to dominate others only at the moment when they occupied the first place in the world's cultural relations. The rise and the decline of Islamic material culture depends to a much larger degree on this factor than on the dogmas of Islam as a religion or the racial characteristics of the different Mussulman peoples.

---

## CHAPTER I

### *The Christian East and its Significance for Islam*

As has been shown by Turaeff, the Russian historian, Christianity introduced a new viewpoint which inaugurated a successful campaign against Græco-Roman paganism as well as against that of the Classical East. Christianity had not yet succeeded in achieving its mission in the East of renewing the world when a rival appeared in the form of a new religion. The struggle between Christianity and paganism was not limited only to the sphere of religion. The majority of Christian preachers held in equal contempt the learning and the arts of the pagan peoples intimately bound as they were with their religious creeds. Moreover, the Christians of the first centuries so intensely believed in the near end of the world that they attached no value to achievements in material and scientific culture or in the practice of government.

Though it is true that the Church contributed to the decline of pagan art and culture which, as a matter of fact, was only available to a few, it raised the cultural level of the popular masses. It propagated the Gospel among many peoples in their mother tongues and in a form suitable to their needs. A popular literature came into being, of a kind which, as far as we know, had until then only existed in few countries. Popular masses began to take part in theological disputes especially in those regions where political conditions permitted the survival of town life. The Asiatic provinces and Egypt were better off in this respect than other parts of the Roman Empire. This was specially so after the period when the West had fallen a victim to the Germanic barbarians and the Balkan Peninsula had been flooded by the Slavs, who in many of the places had almost wholly annihilated cultured populations.

During the period of Hellenism new towns had grown up in Hither Asia and Egypt which had thrown the older ones in the shade. Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch in Syria and Seleucia on the Tigris were only second to Rome in size. In the larger towns of Greek origin the natives formed the lower class of the population and it is to

them that the preachers of Christianity especially turned their attention. Side by side with the Christian holy books in the international Greek tongue there soon arose an imitative and translated literature in the local languages, especially in Syriae and Coptie. With the spread of Christianity beyond the borders of the Roman Empire we find the beginnings of a Christian literature in other tongues, in Nubian and Ethiopian in Africa, and in Armenian, Georgian and other languages in Asia. Inscriptions of the VIth century show that even at that time Arabic was a language which was in use in the daily life of the Church, but we have no testimonies that there was a Christian literature in Arabic in the pre-Islamic period. The further spread of Christianity and its cultural successes are closely bound up with the struggle between the Roman Empire and Iran. This took place principally in the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris, where the local chiefs deserted one side for the other even as the fortunes of war changed. The first town to the east of the Euphrates on the main road from Northern Syria, Edessa (now Urfa), has an exclusive significance in the history of Christianity and Syrian culture. Augar IX (179-216),

the Prince of Edessa, was one of the first ruling chiefs to embrace Christianity. (Later Christian legend has attributed this event to the time of Christ and even invented a correspondence between the Prince of Edessa and the Saviour.) Edessa became the centre of Syrian culture and the original home of Syrian letters. In the Vth century there flourished in this town the so-called Persian theological school which had a great influence on the propagation and strengthening of Christianity in Persia. Earlier it was from Edessa that the first Syrian writer, Bardean (155-222), came. He was born in paganism, embraced Christianity and then reverted to his old religion. He was one of the last representatives of the so-called Gnostic system, which was based upon a combination of pagan and religious philosophy with some Christian ideas and was inimical to the Old Testament. His teachings undoubtedly influenced Manichæism which had arisen in the IIIrd century in Babylonia, then a Persian province.

As the Christian preachers were also compelled to make use of philosophical arguments in order to combat Gnosticism and pagan philosophy, several philosophico-theological schools sprang up.

Emperor Zeno for its Nestorianism In the Vth century Sassanian Persia became the refuge of all those cultured sects—pagans, Jews and Christian heretics—who were being persecuted in Byzantium Before this date the Sassanian Emperors had sometimes forced the inhabitants of Syrian towns to migrate into their territory The first instance of this took place when Shapur I (241-272), who had captured the Emperor Valerian, brought the inhabitants of Antioch and other towns to Persia and made them settle down in the town of Jundishapur in Huzistan which he had founded. This town grew to be the second in size within the Sassanian Empire and under Khusru I (531-579) it was here that arose the school of Graeco-Syrian medicine, which was later to influence the Arabs.

The practice of carrying away Syrian towns men as captives came into existence because they could be made to found different branches of industry, especially that of textile fabrics. The Sassanian Emperors in the same way made use of the Roman captives who happened to be artisans and made them build fortresses and other buildings, specially their irrigation works

In comparing Byzantium of the V-VIIIth centuries with contemporary Sassanian Persia, we



come to the conclusion that while the former still occupied a higher position in culture, the latter was a more progressive country. The progressive quality alluded to above did not always wholly correspond with the intentions of her rulers. The rise of the Sassanian dynasty in the IIIrd century was due to a religious and caste reaction. The logical result of the introduction of foreign culture was the disintegration of this religious and caste basis. National Christian churches were formed in Persia with the Divine Service in the Persian tongue. They not only helped the spread of Christianity in Central Asia and China but influenced the future of the country itself. Up till now the Persian Mussulmans use for the days of the week names which they have borrowed, not from the Mussulman Arabs, but from the Persian Christians. Castes underwent a substantial change towards the end of the Vth century, the agricultural caste became one with that of the artisans and merchants, the third caste instead of comprising agriculturists was composed of the lay official class, the leaders of which sat at Court side by side with the heads of the clergy and the representatives of the military aristocracy. The strivings of the popular

masses pointed to a much further advance, the system of castes was opposed by the sect of the Mazdekites who proposed to replace it by a communistic one involving the destruction not only of proprietary but familial rights

Generally speaking the VIth century, the period of the decadence of pagan cultural traditions in Byzantium, was in Persia the epoch of contact and acquaintance with foreign literature and science. During this period a Persian translation was made of the series of fables brought from India and known as *Kalila and Dimna* which has had a great influence on the literature of the world. At this time Greek philosophy was also being cultivated in Persia. Paul, the Persian, dedicated to Khusrû I his work on Aristotle (in the Syrian tongue) in which he strove to prove the superiority of knowledge over faith, knowledge being free from doubt contributes to the establishment of concord between peoples, faith, on the other hand, deals with the unknowable and leads only to discord.

The trade and industry of Sassanian Persia reached its highest point of development during the VIth century, that is, on the eve of the Arab conquest. It is to this period and later that belong the treasures dealing with Manichaeism,

Christianity in the Central Asian-Iranian (the Sogdian), the Turkish and the Chinese languages, which bear witness to the intense religious propaganda that came from Persia; missionaries followed in the wake of the traders. It was also during this epoch that the Parsi and Christian colonies were established in India.

The Arab conquest was preceded by a long war between Byzantium and Persia (604-630). At one time all the Asiatic provinces of Byzantium as well as Egypt passed into the hands of the Persians. The Persian Viceroy of these provinces had his seat of government at Alexandria, which, it seems, had suffered less destruction than the Syrian towns. Antioch had already fallen on evil days in the VIth century as a result of the earthquake of 526 A.D. and the Persian invasion of 540 A.D. The town was reconstructed by the Emperor Justinian but on a smaller scale. During the VIIth century the Persians devastated the towns and hewed down the olive groves of Syria, traces of this destruction were visible a hundred years later. As we know that the Persians went up as far as Constantinople it is quite probable that Asia Minor had also suffered at their hands. When the fortunes of

war changed in favour of the Emperor Heraclius, the outlying provinces of Persia were subjected to the same treatment not only by the Greeks but by their allies, the Khazars. The treaty of peace restored to the Byzantine Empire its former frontiers, and it appears, enlarged them to some extent towards the north of Mesopotamia. These defeats brought about in Persia the overthrow of Khusru II (628 A D ) and a period of continuous revolts. But Byzantium had also been weakened by the war. Moreover, with the re establishment of the Byzantine power, there again began the persecution of the heretics, Jews and pagans, which made them the natural allies of the Arabs.

Even during the lifetime of Heraclius, who died in 641, the Greeks were compelled to leave to the Arabs all their newly conquered territories except Asia Minor. Only in a few places real opposition was put up against the Arab invader. The victorious occupation of Egypt by the Arabs took place with the help of 4,000 men and the ease, with which Northern Mesopotamia fell, surprised the conquerors themselves.

The period commencing with the beginning of the VIIth century and ending with the middle of the IXth century is considered as the least fecund

in the history of Byzantine literature and culture. This is surely due to the wars with the Persians and the Arabs which were followed by disturbances within the country brought about by an iconoclastic movement. Moreover, the loss of her most cultured provinces could not but react upon the life of Byzantium. It is true that towards Asia Minor the frontiers of the Caliphate spread slowly, but the country, which had given to Christian Art in the VIth century the builders of the Cathedral of Santa Sophia, had been on several occasions subjected to annihilating invasions.

The territories which had passed to the Caliphate were under far better conditions in spite of the fact that they too had not been exempt at different periods from disorders. The position of the Christians during the first epoch of Mussulman domination was better than in the succeeding ones. At the beginning the conquerors did not possess their own national culture and therefore stood in need of the help of educated non-Muslims amongst whom the Christians occupied the first place. During the first centuries of Islam there flourished a number of prominent exponents of Greek and Syrian literature and science in Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia. Jacob of Edessa (*circa*

640-708) was specially famous. According to Church historians he stood in the same relation to the Jacobite Church as St. Jerome to the Roman. The banks of the Euphrates, as in bygone days, became the centre of the cultural achievements of the world. Beside the Christian universities there were Jewish and Manichaean ones. For the purposes of propaganda, to a far greater extent than the Mussulmans themselves, these non-Muslims took advantage of that multiplication of trade relations which came into existence after the formation of the Islamic world power. To the Mussulman period should be attributed the successful conversions by the Christians and the Manichaeans in China and Mongolia and by the Jews in the Caucasus and on the banks of the Volga.

We have a less clear picture of the importance of this period in the history of Christian art. It is now known that the Mussulman rulers made use of the service of Christian and Persian artisans in the building of their profane and religious edifices. Artisans were grouped into national economic guilds and separate buildings or parts of large constructions were entrusted to them. Some of the larger churches were forcibly possessed

by the Mussulmans, as for instance, the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist at Damascus, on the site of which a splendid mosque was built in the VIIIth century. By an irony of fate the former edifice is still represented by its southern gates where one can read the following inscription in Greek :  
“ Thy kingdom, O Christ, is the kingdom of all times and Thy power unto all generations.”  
Generally speaking, however, the Christians were left in possession of their churches. In fact, for a long time, new churches and monasteries were built under Islamic rule without any opposition from the rulers. The so-called Treaty of Omar by which the Christians, as it were, bound themselves not to build new churches nor to repair old ones, was invented by historians much later. Over all the vast area of the Caliphate from St. Vincent in the south-western end of Portugal to Samarkand we see rich Christian foundations endowed with immovable property. The Christian subjects of the Caliphate were not hindered from keeping up relations with the rest of the Christian world nor from accepting contributions for their foundations. In the Council of Constantinople (680-681) Jerusalem was represented by a Christian delegate. Christians in the different parts of the

Caliphate were also in close contact with one another. At the time of the Arab conquest Egypt was the only country where industry flourished and the Caliphs took steps to reconstruct it on the Syrian littoral especially at Acre and Tyre. A little before 720 A. D. the doctrines of Greek philosophy were again imported from Alexandria into Antioch.

From the second half of the VIIIth century Christians formed the channel through which the Mussulmans began to learn the Greek sciences. We know that the Caliph Mansur (754-775) asked the Byzantine Emperor to send him manuscripts of mathematical treatises. In the IXth century the chief translator of Greek texts into Syriac and Arabic, Hunem-ibn Ishaq, a Christian Arab, spent two years in the Byzantine possessions studying Greek language and literature and brought home a number of manuscripts from there. The Mussulmans, however, could acquire Greek scholarship from their Christian co-citizens independently of Byzantium. The medical school of Jundishapur continued to flourish for several centuries after the Arab conquest, though the doctors of that town handed down their knowledge from generation to generation only to their intimates and concealed it



from outsiders in order not to lose their monopoly. It is not known whether Theophilos of Edessa, the Court Astronomer of the Caliph Mahdi (775-785), who translated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into Syriac, ever went to Byzantium.

During the first half of the IXth century the non-Muslims and non-Arabs of the Caliphate were more educated than the Mussulmans and the Arabs. An arrogant consciousness of cultural superiority on the part of the non-Arabs over the Arabs gave birth in the Mussulman world to a number of nationalistic movements grouped under the name of *shu'ubia*, (*shu'b* = nation; pl *shu'ub* = race). At this epoch a tendency to re-constitute and magnify national and religious culture is noticeable amongst the non-Arabs, who were composed of Christians of different nations and sects, Jews, Persians, Zoroastrians and the last representatives of Hellenistic paganism in the Mesopotamian town of Harran, where in the IXth century Greek philosophical teachings had been imported from Antioch. The same century witnessed the renaissance of Byzantium. However, the Caliphate had this advantage over the latter country that it united under its sceptre *a more numerous and a more varied set of cultural*

elements, who found under the Arabs, thanks to the tolerance laid down by the Koran, a larger possibility for their activity than under the Byzantine Emperors. The tendency of each group to attach an exaggerated importance to its people or its faith did not hinder it from acquiring knowledge from the other. Thus a Christian could have a Muslim or a pagan pupil or *vice versa*. Though the Christians stood nearer to Hellenism, their common source of culture, than the Mussulmans, it gradually became difficult for them to keep for themselves that place of leadership which they had occupied during the first centuries of Islam. If we compare the life of the Arabs and Persian Mussulmans with that of others who lived under the Caliphate, we see that the latter grouped themselves into cliques with narrow interests which did not afford sufficient possibilities to their talents. Christians became acquainted with Greek scholarship at an earlier epoch and in a more thorough manner than the Mussulmans but they could not give it that forward urge nor create models for further scholarly work as was done by the Mussulmans. Even the most enlightened of the Eastern Christian peoples, the Syrians, did not produce a single scholar who could

compare with Farabi, Ibn-Sina, Biruni or Ibn-Rushd. The best scholars amongst the Christians and the pagans had more pupils and readers from among the Muslims than their own co-religionists. Under the influence of the onward march of Arab culture the Syrian Christians lost that contact with Hellenism which had formerly made them superior to the Mussulmans. In the programme of their higher studies the language and literature of the Arabs began to occupy the place which had formerly belonged to Greek language and literature.

We must not draw the conclusion from what has been said above that the cultural life of the Eastern Christians during and after the blossoming of Mussulman culture had no importance in itself nor that it ceased to exert an influence on the culture of the world. For a long time the superiority of the Mussulmans in science and technique was more qualitative than quantitative. In Syria and Egypt the intellectual professions of scribes and doctors remained during the second half of the Xth century in the hands of the Christians in the same way as trade and industry was in those of the Jews. During the XIIth century the Syrians were the first in the history of Christianity to conclude peace with the representatives of different

religious beliefs. An agreement was reached between the heads of the Nestorian and Jacobite Churches and was observed by their successors, who missed no occasion to show respect to each other in spite of the fact that each of the two churches held to its own dogmas and rituals. From the middle of the IXth century the position of the Christians in the Islamic states became worse than before. With the raising of the cultural level among the Mussulmans the help of the non-Muslims was less needed. Probably no small part in this was played by the example of Byzantium which reduced the Christian subjects of the Mussulmans to the position occupied by the Jews in the Christian states during the Middle Ages. However, the Mussulmans never indulged in the persecution of those who believed in another religion as the Christians did in Spain. On the whole the position of the Christians even afterwards did not always correspond to the order about the payment of taxes by the non-Muslims "in humiliation," nor were they subjected according to the terms of the so-called Treaty of Omar to wearing distinguishing badges on their dresses. High officials from among the Christians wore the same apparel as Mussulman dignitaries and

treated the masses with the same contempt. This provoked protests against Christian penetration which sometimes degenerated into bloodshed. During the periods of political disorder naturally the rights of the Christians and generally of the non-Muslims suffered more than those of others. Gradually the Church began to lose its lands which had constituted the principal source of its wealth. In Egypt, however, even in the middle of the XIVth century, in spite of persecutions and bloodshed, the property of the Church measured 11,250 *desyatins* \*. In Persia, except for the westernmost parts and a little towards the east, Christianity gradually disappeared. We do not know how and at what period this actually occurred. From among the provinces of the late Roman Empire Christianity wholly disappeared only from North Africa though to the present day some of the geographical names dating from the Graeco-Roman period are still preserved there (e.g., the town and province of Tripoli, the town of Constantine in Algeria, etc.). In this case, too, we do not know the reasons for

\* The *desyatin* is a Russian measure corresponding to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres

this phenomenon. It may be partially explained by the fact that North Africa suffered more from the Arab invasion than other countries. Carthage, which had been reconstructed by the Romans and converted into one of the largest towns of the world, according to some into the second largest town of the Empire, was destroyed at the end of the VIIth century by the Arabs and never again rose from its ruins. In the second half of the Middle Ages North Africa was again laid waste by the invasion of the Beduins. Special interest attaches to the history of those countries which used to be Christian, and where Mussulman culture developed for a time but was replaced by the Christian. Such are Spain under the Kings of Castile where in the middle of the XIIIth century the famous astronomical tables were composed for Alfonso X, and Sicily and Southern Italy, first under the Norman Kings and later under the Hohenstaufens, where Palermo, which became the chief town of the island under the Arabs, retains to this day its importance. Such was also the Georgian kingdom of XI-XIIIth centuries. Armenia and Georgia which already at the beginning of the VIIth century were divided by church schism kept up, because of

religious convictions, cultural contact with the Greek world, but were subjected at the same time to the influence of the Arab and Persian Mussulman culture. The poetry of both Georgia and Armenia is entirely bound up with Persian poetry. Notwithstanding the unfavourable conditions under which they lived after the loss of their political independence, the popular masses of these countries obstinately adhered to their religion and managed to preserve to some extent their cultural traditions. In the beginning of the XVIIth century Abbas, the Shah of Persia, compelled Armenians and Georgians to migrate into Persia for cultural purposes in the same way as the Sassanian Emperors had forced the Syrians. It was during this same century that the Armenians first came into contact with Western European culture, which, a century later, also began to influence the Georgians.

Europeans, who travelled to Syria and Egypt, looked upon the local Christians as their natural allies. They lived long in Christian monasteries, where they learnt the Arab tongue and generally acquired necessary education for the study of the country and its population. Hence, the works of Arab Christian historians of the XIIIth century such as those of al-Makin and abul-Faraj were

translated and published in Europe in the XVIIth century earlier than those of the Mussulmans. Synchronising with this period was the epoch of the spiritual renaissance of Christian Arabs and Armenians under the influence of Europe. The Eastern Christians were separated from Europe by a lesser gulf of religious difference than from the Mussulmans. As during the Middle Ages and even now, the Christians were less influenced by a profane national literature than the Mussulmans, they studied not only Greek science but Greek *belles-lettres*. In the VIIIth century a Syrian Christian translated the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The *Iliad* was also translated in the XXth century by a Christian Arab. A Russian scholar came back from Syria in 1864 with the impression that "the Christian peoples of the East, as far as education is concerned, stand higher than the Mussulmans."

It was not always that the Eastern Christians preferred Europeans to their Mussulman co-nationals and co-citizens. During the Crusades, according to a Russian historian of the Church, "the clergy and the masses desired the return of the Muhammadan yoke rather than the continuation of the power of the Latins." In the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries the Echmiadze Armenians



often solicited the protection of the Persian Shah against propaganda by Catholics. In more recent times the economic hegemony of the world by the Europeans has struck the Eastern Christians of the East as hard as the Mussulmans. In 1912 a Christian publicist in answer to an article written by a Mussulman about the necessity of "Mussulman unity" wrote in the Arab press that all the inhabitants of the East should unite against Europe without difference of religion, what was wanted was not a "Mussulman" but an Oriental unity. Under the influence of Europe the educated classes in Hither Asia are sometimes inclined to place national unity above religious unity. It is quite possible that within the lifetime of the present generation there will take place the union of the Christian and the Mussulman Arabs in the name of an Arab national renaissance. A contemporary Arab writer, Amin Raihani, with whom the Russians have been recently acquainted by Professor I. U. Krachkovsky, speaks of the religious beliefs and holy books of the Christians and the Mussulmans in such terms that it is difficult to guess which of these two religions he actually professes.

---

## CHAPTER II

### *The Beginning of the Caliphate and of Arab Culture*

During the VIIth century for the first and the last time in the memory of man there arose a popular movement in the Arabian Peninsula which brought about the foundation of a world empire. It is probable that in pre historic times a like movement from Arabia had populated Syria and Mesopotamia with the Semites. What happened in the VIIth century had already been prepared by the unorganised migration of the Arabs beyond the frontiers of their Peninsula. However, at that epoch it did not possess the character of an invasion. In 401 B C , at the time of Xenophon, a locality to the east of the Euphrates lower than the mouth of the Habur was called Arabia. In the first century after Christ, at the time of Strabon, half the population of the town of Kopt in Upper Egypt consisted of Arabs. Syrian Arabs, as subjects of Byzantium, and the Arabs in the valley of the Euphrates, as subjects of Persia, took an active part in the wars between the two empires.

In the VIIth and VIIIth centuries the Arabs conquered a large number of peoples who were incomparably superior to them in culture. Nevertheless the Arab conquerors did not lose their national characteristics in the way in which the Germans lost theirs in Europe and the Mongols in Asia, but subjected the populations of Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt and North Africa to their ethnographical influence. The triumph of the Arabic language, however, was not due to any pressure on the part of the Arab state. It was brought about almost against the will of the rulers. The spread of Islam amongst the subject peoples destroyed the entire financial system of the Caliphate. Consequently it was much less desirable from their point of view to encourage the spread of the official tongue amongst the non-Mussulmans. The Christians were prohibited from speaking it or from sending their children to Mussulman schools. Notwithstanding these measures, Islam became the religion of a large majority of the population and even that portion of it which did not embrace Islam adopted the Arab tongue.

The success of Arabic can be explained by the fact that the Arabs from the very beginning did not exclusively depend for their expansion upon

their arms as the Germans, the Persians and the Mongols had done. Already in the VIIth century the Arabs had acquired some spiritual culture, had worked upon their literary language and prized eloquence and poetry above all things. Some definite literary forms had been elaborated, rhythmical prose and a few measures for poetry were already in use. The subject matter of poetry, of the *Quasida*, had been reduced to certain clichés. The poets employed them for praising themselves, their heroes, their tribes or for mocking at their adversaries. Beside the poetry of the desert there existed a more refined poetry of the town which flourished principally among the tribe of the

h

The inhabitants of the chief town centres, the Qureishis of Mecca and the Sakifis of Taifa, notwithstanding their inimical attitude towards Muhammad at the beginning of his activities, soon took their stand at the head of the Mussulman commune at the moment when it was beginning to change into a state. A saying was attributed to the Prophet according to which the Imam, the head of the commune, should be a Qureishi. In the conquered territories the Qureishis and the Sakifis were founders of towns and organisers of

governments. As a rule an Arab warrior was followed by an Arab townsman, to whom was chiefly due the merit of strengthening the feeling of Arab nationality in the conquered countries.

As is the case with all the aspects of the cultural life of the Mussulmans the type of the Islamic town gradually came into existence as a result of the mingling of Arab with local traditions. There is no generic type of the Mussulman town even at the present day. Some European travellers have attempted to explain the type of the so called "oriental" town as resulting from a fear of "oriental" despotism, a town where the apartments for living are hidden in the interior courtyards and from the streets; except for the shops, you can only see the palisades. This presupposition is not quite correct since the excavations of Pompeii have proved that this was also the type of the Roman town. On the other hand those few Europeans who have managed to visit Mecca have been astonished to see in the most sacred town of Islam houses of the "European type" with windows looking on to the streets. In the town of Yemen travellers report to have seen high houses with richly decorated façades. It has not yet been elucidated whether this is a survival of

local traditions or the result of foreign (principally Indian) influence

The Arabs, even after they had settled down in towns, preserved for a long time their familial and tribal arrangements. The sense of unity amongst people of the same tribe was thus closer than between inhabitants of the same town. In fact, when new towns were built or occupied, special quarters were reserved for each of the tribes. With this characteristic feature of Arab life are connected the plans of many of their towns. For instance, at Damascus, besides the city walls, there exist walls that have portals dividing separate quarters and even streets. The Arabs introduced this type of town into Persia. Merv of the XI-XIIth centuries was built upon this model. Among contemporary towns Hamadan does not possess the common city wall but the separate quarters are shut away at night from one another by means of portals. Similar gateways are built on streets which stretch beyond the town limits.

In Syria during the VIIth century the Arabs did not build any new towns. Only during the VIIIth century under the Caliph Suleyman (715-717) Ramla was built on the main road from

Jerusalem to the sea In spite of the fact that the Mussulmans acknowledged the religious significance of Jerusalem, the centre of activity was transferred to the new town, which became for several centuries the chief town of Palestine But Ramla had only a local importance and did not exercise any influence on the general development of Arab culture The chief centre of political and cultural life in Syria remained the ancient town of Damascus which was already considered in the IVth century as one of the finest towns of the world it became the capital of the Ommeyad Caliphs Its area does not correspond to our idea of the size of the metropolis of a world empire Till the second half of the Xth century it lay within the boundaries of its ancient stone walls The principal street, the so called "straight street, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (9, 11) which crossed the town from the eastern to the western gates, was about two *versts* \* long and the distance between the northern and the southern gates was still less In the centre of the town there was a square which held the chief temple, first pagan,

\* *Verst* = 3 500 feet

then Christian and ultimately Mussulman. The mosque stood at first by the side of the Church of St John the Baptist, but under the Caliph al-Walid I (705-715) the Christians were compelled to give up their place of worship to the Mussulmans, and it was upon this site that was built the famous cathedral-mosque of the Ommeyyads, with which no other later edifice of the Mussulman world can rival in richness and splendour. Not far from the mosque was the Palace of the Ommeyyads which had already disappeared before the Middle Ages.

Besides Damascus there existed Arab military camps in Syria of secondary importance, as for instance, Jahia to the south-west of Damascus

and Dahik to the north of Aleppo. In some of the countries these camps grew into large towns and replaced the older centres of town life. Such was the origin of Cairo. At first the Arabs built on the Nile a town-camp called Fustat (Graeco-Latin *fossaton*—camp surrounded by a moat). It occupied on the eastern bank of the Nile an area about 5 versts long and 1 verst broad. In the centre was a square with the principal mosque, now the Mosque of Amr, named after the conqueror of Egypt, and the palace of the ruler.



Kanouan in Tunis, which was latterly destroyed, Kufi on the Euphrates, Basra in the Shatt-al-Arab and Shiraz in Persia were similar town-camps. Numerous other towns were built by the Arabs after the period of conquest when the necessity for military camps had disappeared. Such towns often had a long life, as for example, Fez in Morocco (built towards the end of the VIIIth century) and Gyanja (Ehsavetopol) within the boundaries of Russia (built in the IXth century). We know in history of only one instance when the Arabs abandoned a town which had grown out of their military camps for the sake of reconstructing a pre-Islamic town formerly destroyed by them. This was Balkh to the south of the Amu Daria which gave place to Balkh, ancient Bactria.

In Iran and Turkestan the Arabs contributed a great deal to the development of town life as well as to the transformation of the type of towns. The pre-Islamic towns of these countries comprised a citadel (*diz*) and the town proper, which was called *shahrستان*, literally, a place where power was centred. Almost the same significance attached to the word *medina* borrowed by the Arabs from the Syrians. It meant a palace where

justice was meted out. The market was to be found outside the city walls by the side of the gates. According to recent investigations this situation of the market corresponds with the original meaning of the word "bazar," which was borrowed from the non-Iranian and non-Semitic languages of Hither Asia and signified "business at the gates." Under the Arabs town life gradually passed from the *shahrستان* to the suburbs which was the place of residence of the representatives of the industrial and commercial classes. It was here that they gradually fixed the type of towns, which till then had existed in the countries of Hither Asia, with bazars running along the principal streets crossing the town from east to west and from north to south, and where on the cross roads the market place contained the principal mosque. There can be no doubt that Mussulman traders followed in the steps of their Christian and Jewish predecessors. At Merv under Islam the town centre was transferred from the *shahrستان* to the western suburbs on the canal Majan where in pre-Islamic times had been situated the see of the Christian Metropolitan. On the site of Isphahan, one of the largest of the Mussulman towns of

Persia, there had formerly existed a Jewish suburban colony at a distance of a few miles from the *shahrstan*. In the Xth century this town grew to be twice as large as the ancient *shahrstan*.

Viceroy's lived in the chief towns. Official institutions were also situated there. These were to a large extent adopted by the Arabs from the cultured peoples that they had conquered. Persian influence was already an important factor even during the Caliphate of Omar (634-644). Secretariats and accounts offices were introduced and the word "*divan*," probably of Persian origin, was used to indicate them. The Arabs borrowed similar terms of Greek and Latin origin from territories which had formerly belonged to Byzantium. For instance, they borrowed the Latin word "*questor*" from Egypt. Clerks, even after the Arab conquest, were recruited from among the local inhabitants, who employed the local tongues, either Greek or Persian. Only at the end of the VIIth century Arabic was introduced into office work. From this moment Arab coins began to be stamped with pure Arab or Mussulman inscriptions. At an earlier date money was coined in the former Byzantine possessions with the image of the Cross in the Byzantine manner and in the former Persian

provinces coins were made of the Persian type with the image of a sacrificial fire altar. The Arabs at the time of the conquest found the gold monetary system prevalent in Byzantium and the silver system in Persia. This difference continued even under Islam. The Mussulman monetary system included gold *dinars* (Latin *dinarius*), silver *dirhems* (Greek *drachme*, a term used in Persia after Alexander) and brass *felses* (Greek *obolos*). *Dinars* were minted only in the capitals, at Damascus under the Ommeyyads and at Bagdad under the Abbasids. *Dirhems* were coined in the provincial chief towns whereas *felses* had only a local monetary value. In Eastern Persia and Central Asia during the Xth century only the *dirhems* were considered as money and *dinars* as precious metal. The *dinar* weighed a *zlotnik* \* and the *dirhem* a little less. It was equal in value to one-twentieth of a *dinar*. It will be seen that there was an attempt on the part of the Arabs to establish that ratio between the gold and silver monetary units which has been the aim of all governments to fix from the old Persian to the modern Western European states. Their attempt towards fixing

\* *Zlotnik*=96th part of a pound

a permanent ratio also proved unsuccessful Silver rose and fell in price in relation to gold

The influence of local traditions of government was not limited to the boundaries of the territory where they had originated In the governmental and economic life of the Caliphate we meet with a curious mixture of terms borrowed from different languages and words of Byzantine origin were employed in the former possessions of the Persians and *vice versa*. For instance, the post which, as in classical times, served for the transport of governmental messengers or for the carrying of reports to rulers, was called *berid* from the Latin *veredus*, though originally the Greeks had copied the postal system from the Persians and called it by a Persian word *angaros* The Persian military word *jund* had been adopted by the Arabs even before Islam and it had its largest application in Syria where the military camps also had been changed into towns The territory of this former Byzantine province was divided under the Caliphs into several *junds* Provincial viceroys were called either Emirs of *junds* or the Emirs of *masrs*, i e , towns (a Yemenite word) which was distinguished from *rustaks* (a Persian word) or agricultural localities. Words of pure Arabic origin

were used for the bodyguard of the ruler (*haras*) and the military police (*shurta*) at the head of which stood a special chief, who was the right hand man of the viceroy. It seems that even these outward attributes of power were borrowed by the Arabs from the Persians. The Persian governmental system had always appeared to them as a model to be copied but it took some time before the Caliphs could become ' despots of the Persian type. Under the Ommeyyads the Caliph was not so much a Persian Shah as he was an Arab Sherkh (an elder) or Syyud (chief of the tribe). Even the Caliph al Walid I had to ask his subjects not to call him by his name. In the sphere of material culture, as distinguished from the governmental, the Caliphate owed more to Byzantium than to Persia. The textile industry of Egypt retransplanted to the Syrian littoral influenced not only Persia but Turkestan, cloths called by Egyptian names were being made at Shiraz and in the towns of Turkestan. At a later date with regard to material culture the Mussulmans assigned the first place to the Chinese and the second to the Greeks. A Persian author of the XIIIth century by the name of Aufi, as well as Clavijo, a Spanish knight of the XVth century,

basing his information on the Mussulmans, say that according to the Chinese themselves as far as industry was concerned they were the only people who had been blessed with the faculty of adequate sight. All the others were blind, except the Greeks (the Franks, according to Clavijo) whom they credited with the possession of one eye.

In matters of scholarship without doubt the first place was occupied by the Greeks. Translations from the Greek into Arabic began very early under the influence of the Christians. The Ommeyad prince Khalid (son of the Caliph Yezid I) who died in 704 before he had reached his fortieth year, was a great lover of Greek scholarship. (In 683 when his father died he was still a child.) He is credited with the translation of several treatises dealing with astronomy, medicine and chemistry. It was even asserted that he had succeeded in discovering the philosopher's stone by which gold could be artificially produced. Khalid ruled over the town of Hims (Greek Emesa) in Northern Syria where there had been of old a temple of the Sun and later one of the largest Christian cathedrals, a portion of which was occupied by Mussulmans for their worship. We are told that in the Xth century part of the building

remained a church and the rest was dedicated to Islamic divine service. It is possible that at the time of Kbalid besides the Christians there were also pagans at Hims. Of all the towns of Syria Hims accorded the warmest reception to the Arab conquerors, a fact which can be explained by the hostility of its Christian inhabitants towards the religious reforms of the Emperor Heraclius

Notwithstanding the contact of the Mussulmans with Greek culture at Alexandria and the Syrian towns, the chief centres of cultural activity, as far as scholarship and the sciences were concerned, were the towns of Kufa and Basra on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris. Both towns had been founded under Omar according to the usual plan, there were separate quarters for the different tribes and a square in the middle with the cathedral-mosque and the ruler's palace. Basra was later on transferred to another locality and the old town has now disappeared. Kufa lost its importance long ago but its cathedral-mosque exists till this day. It has not yet been properly studied. The walls of the mosque were built by Persian artisans of very durable material and are of great interest especially because, as far as we know, they have never undergone



any transformation. The ruins of Wasit, a town built by the Ommeyyads on one of the branches of the Tigris, have also not been investigated. It did not retain any political importance after the Ommeyyads though for many centuries it had been an industrial and cultural centre.

During the VIIIth century Kufa and Basra became, to a greater extent than any town of the epoch, centres of an intense scientific activity. Converts to Islam, their pupils and descendants founded the sciences of Mussulman theology and jurisprudence there. Besides, we find schools of grammarians and philologists in both towns engaged in constant rivalry with one another. But these founders of the science of the Arabic language were not always Arab-born. One of the representatives of the school of Basra, Khahl-ibn-Alnad, compiled an important dictionary of Arabic, which formed the basis for a dictionary of scientific and technical terms which was written at the end of the Xth century in Khorasan (Khahl had also written his work in that province). A study of this dictionary would prove the influence of Greece upon Arab scholarship especially in the classification of the sciences. Philosophy was divided into two fundamental parts,

theoretical and practical. Logic was taken by some to belong to theoretical philosophy, others treated it as a third sub-division of philosophy. There were some that considered it to be only an "instrument of philosophy." Theoretical philosophy was divided into three sub-sections, the science of nature, the science of God, and the place between the two was occupied by the science of mathematics. The Arabs changed the Greek terminology for the latter and replaced it by one of their own which meant the same thing. Mathematics had four parts: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music, that is, those of the seven liberal arts (*artes liberales*) which constituted during the Middle Ages in Europe the so called "*quadrivium*." Later on mathematics and logic were sometimes considered as propaedeutic, that is, preparatory to the study of the natural sciences and theology or of metaphysics. The science of God (theology, as in many other cases the Greek terminology is here used), does not possess any sub-divisions, though later there was an attempt to divide theology and metaphysics into several disciplines. The science of nature had several sub-divisions amongst which figure chemistry and medicine. Practical philosophy was divided

into ethics, economics and politics. The three branches of knowledge, the “ *trivium* ” of Europe, viz , grammar, rhetoric and dialectics, are mentioned but are not grouped under one head. A special chapter is dedicated to grammar preceded by those dealing with jurisprudence and Mussulman theology and followed by treatises on secretarial work, poetry and history. Rhetoric and dialectics are mentioned in the chapter on logic as sub-divisions of the latter.

---

## CHAPTER III

### *Bagdad and the Further Development of Arab Culture*

Mussulman theology, Arabic grammar and philology began at Kufa and Basra. On the further development of these sciences and on other achievements of scientific activity and thinking the Court of the Abbasid Caliphs exercised a great influence. In the sixties of the VIIIth century the Caliph Mansur built a new capital on the western banks of the Tigris, on the site of a large village and a monastery belonging to the Nestorian Patriarchate, which bore the Persian name of Bagdad and which became the seat of the Caliphate. The official name of Madinat-as-Salam (the town of "peace" or of "prosperity" principally referring to Paradise) given to it by its founder was not adopted by its inhabitants. This name exclusively figured on the coins of the Caliphs. The word Bagdad replaced it only after the advent of the Mongols in 1258. The town of Mansur, which has totally disappeared since a long time, was

built on quite an original plan. The trait which distinguished it from all the other towns of the period was its circular form. Four large portals corresponding to the four points of the compass were cut into the walls with entrance arches and wide spaces for the troops. All the four gates opened on to the central place which contained the caliphal palace, the cathedral-mosque and the official buildings or "divans." These last were at that time divided into seven: (1) divan of the seal, that is, governmental offices which dealt with papers meant for the Royal assent, (2) divan of diplomatic documents, (3) divan of the guard, (4) divan of the troops; (5) divan of the state revenues; (6) divan of public expenditure, (7) divan of stores. Besides the "divans" and the official buildings the central square also held the treasury, arsenal, arms and "the common kitchen," evidently meant for the guard and the officials of the Caliph. The whole of this space was surrounded by a wall and one could only reach it by means of the city gates as there were no streets communicating with the different quarters. The bazars were held in one of the suburbs. Mansur's capital was much larger in size than Damascus yet it cannot be compared in extent with

the capitals of modern states The radius of the circle which formed the basis of the town plan measured less than two versts

The story of the foundation of Bagdad shows to what extent the governmental form of the Mussulman world and the life of its rulers had changed since the time of the Prophet and the first Caliphs The further evolution of this form took place under the succeeding Caliphs In the first half of the IXth century we witness the development of a bureaucratic organisation with an increase in the number of divana and in the power of the chief among the officials, viz, the vizir It was then that the Caliphs began surrounding themselves with non-Arah guarda, who were drawn from amongst the representatives of the Iranian military aristocracy and from slaves, usually Turkia, from Central Asia Beside the vizir and the chiefs of the guard, the principal official personage was the "Kazi of Kazis," i.e., the head of the Judicial Department Under Mansur the higher officials were content to receive the small pay to which they had been used under the Ommeyyads, viz, 300 dirhems per month (*circa* £7½) Under Mamun (813-833) a new scale of salaries was introduced

which was not only high for the Middle Ages but even for our times. The chief Kazi of Egypt received under Mamun 4,000 dirhems per month (*circa* £80) and according to another report even more than this sum, *i e*, 7 dinars (*circa* £3½) daily. At Bagdad the salary of the vizir was 7,000 dinars (*circa* £3,500) per month and the chief Kazi received for the same period 500 dinars (*circa* £250). These high salaries partly explained the custom that the heads of departments had to pay for the upkeep of their subordinate officials. But still the income of the vizir, after he had paid his subordinates, came up to 1,000 dinars (*circa* £500) per month. Generally speaking the money spent on the court and the officials in the Xth century when a comparatively small number of territories belonged to the Caliphs, was much larger than during the period when the Caliphate reached its zenith under Mansur and Harun al-Rashid.

From what has been recounted above it will be seen that even in the East rulers did not exercise that influence on the life of their country which they are supposed to have done. To those who are not orientalists, Bagdad is bound up with the name of Harun-al-Rashid and his Court.

In reality, however, the Bagdad of Harun's time was but a small town in comparison with what it became under some of the less worthy Caliphs of the IXth and Xth centuries. Similarly we labour under a mistaken notion when we maintain that the Mussulmans began to assimilate the principles of the Greek sciences because of the orders of the earlier Abbasid Caliphs, especially of Mansur and Mamun, to acquire and translate manuscripts. Though this subject has not yet been wholly investigated there seems to be little doubt that the scholarship of the Mussulman period and the achievements of Greek science in pre-Islamic Iran stand in close relationship to each other. In the Courts of Mansur and Mamun we meet with a number of scholars of Persian origin besides a few Jews. Translations of scientific treatises were made not only with the help of the Syrians but also from Pehlevi, the Persian language of the Sassanian epoch. The astronomical tables were known by the Persian word *zī* which means a warp. As they had become acquainted with the researches of the Greeks through intermediaries, the Arabs did not know the Greek poets or historians and therefore did not have a clear idea of the chronology and



development of the Greek sciences. The history of Greece began for them with Philip of Macedonia. They had a very hazy knowledge of the lives of philosophers and scholars. Even the specialists thought that Socrates had been put to death by the orders of the Greek king. Some of the Greek scholars were taken to be Persians because they had come to know of them through Pehlevi translations.

Besides Greece India exercised an influence over Persia in Sassanian times as well as when that country had passed under Islam. This was also largely due to the Greeks, though in some cases it was independent of them. Greek influence was specially noticeable in astronomy, that of India in arithmetic and algebra. Indians were the inventors of the numbers which are known in Europe as Arabic and which came to the West through Persia and Egypt. Algebra, which was almost wholly unknown to the Greeks, except for the Alexandrian mathematician Diofant (IVth century) attained a great development in India. Europeans came to know of it from the Arabs and adopted its Arabic name (*al-jabr*). Of the other sciences Indian medicine had some influence on the Greeks as can be seen from the fact that we

meet with Indian terminology in the works of Dioscuros, the Alexandrian doctor of the first century B. C. The Indians on the other hand recognised the authority of the "Bactrian" doctor. It might be surmised that of the different branches of medicine surgery was chiefly influenced by the Greeks as its development in India had been but short-lived.

Scientific activity largely but not wholly concentrated during the IXth and Xth centuries in the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates. The old cultural towns, such as Basra, also participated in it Kufa having lost its importance under the Abbasids. The same was the case with Harran where Greek scholarship had been introduced from Antioch and with Bagdad, the caliphal capital. In various ways the cultured writer and populariser Jahiz (died in 869) as well as Kindi, the first independent thinker and philosopher amongst the Arabs (European Alkindus; died 873) were connected with Basra. In the Xth century there arose at Basra a society of free-thinkers and dilettante philosophers, something like a masonic lodge, under the name of "Brothers of Purity." A collection of their works composed of 51 brochures on different branches of science had a

great success. At the end of the Xth century one of the Spanish mathematicians took it home with him. Four centuries later it was translated into Persian for one of the Timurid princes. Bagdad attracted writers and scholars from all the parts of the Mussulman world but especially from Persia and Central Asia. At the capital Kindi had a rival in the astronomer abu-Ma'shar, who was a native of Balkh. The same town gave birth to abu-Zaid, the most famous of Kindi's disciples. At an earlier epoch there lived at Bagdad the mathematician Mubammad-ibn Musa-al-Khorezmi (European Algorithm), who died after 847 and came from Khorezm, now the Khanate of Khiva. He was the author of works on algebra and arithmetic and was considered in Europe till the epoch of the Renaissance a great authority. The word "logarithm" is derived from a corruption of his name. From distant Fergana, on the borders of the Mussulman world towards the east, came the astronomer Ahmad-al-Fargani (European Alfraganus) who died in 861. Another native of Turkestan was the well-known philosopher abu-Nasr al-Farabi (European Alfarabius), who was a Turk by race and had studied at Bagdad. He died at Damascus in

950. Amongst the scholars from Harran a prominent place is occupied by the mathematician and astronomer al-Battani (European Albategnius) who worked at Rakka on the Euphrates and died in 929. The first knowledge in Europe of trigonometrical functions is derived from him. In both Greece and India trigonometry was studied only in relation to astronomy. It was only in the XIIIth century that it began to be treated in the East as an independent science.

The ignorance of the Arabs of Greek philosophy and history was reflected in their philosophy and exact sciences. Arab scholars could not distinguish between apocryphal texts attributed to the philosophers of antiquity and authentic ones. Sometimes they mixed together philosophers who bore the same or similar names but lived at different epochs, such as Plato and Plotinus. They were not clearly conscious of the difference between the teachings of Plato with its later development into neo-Platonism and those of Aristotle. Thus "theology" which included the doctrines of Plotinus (IIIrd century A.D.) was attributed by them to Aristotle. This fantastic notion of the Arabs regarding the teachings of Aristotle was accepted by the Europeans of the

Middle Ages who had read of it in translations made by the Jews. At a later date it became known to Europeans from the Greek original that "theology and mystical philosophy" did not at all correspond with the teachings of Aristotle. The Arab philosophers in the same way as the Catholic Scholastics attempted to reconcile Greek philosophy with the dogmas of religion. It was for this reason that some historians apply the word "scholastic" to the Arabs themselves.

The close contact which existed between the different parts of the Mussulman world contributed to a quick exchange of cultural values. The monumental historical compilation by Tabari which remains to this day the chief source of our information about the first centuries of Islam, was published at the beginning of the 9th century at Bagdad. In the same century it penetrated to the furthestmost western and eastern parts of the Mussulman world. Almost at one and the same time excerpts from it were made and published at Cordova for the Spanish Caliph, al-Hakem II (961-976), with supplementary data dealing with the history of Spain and Africa, and at Bukhara in the Persian language for the Emir Mansur I of the Samanid dynasty, who was his contemporary.

The rapid spread of the geographical literature of the Arahs, perhaps the most valuable monument of Mussulman culture of the IX-Xth centuries, may be cited as another instance. The first maps and astronomical calculations under the Caliphate were made at Bagdad in the court of al-Mamun. In the Xth century the researches of abu-Zaid, a native of Balkh and a disciple of Kindi, were elaborated first by Istakhri of Fars and then by Ibn-Shaukal, a Bagdad merchant who lived in North Africa. In the geographical works of the Arahs of the Xth century, we find a description of all the countries constituting the Mussulman world of the period from Spain to Turkestan and the mouth of the Indus. The chief towns are described, articles of industrial exploitation and fabrication are mentioned and clear and exact information is given about the distribution of cultivated and waste lands as well as of plants, some of which, like cotton, were first brought by the Arabs to Europe. Cotton was introduced by them into Sicily and Spain and is still called in Western European languages by its Arab name. It is only because of the Arab geographers that modern scholars possess material by which they can judge how little the climatic and

the physico-geographical conditions of Hither and Central Asia have changed during the last thousand years. The cultural precursors of the Arabs, including the Greeks, have left us no such reports regarding the earlier periods.

Apart from the description of different countries we find among the Arabs an attempt at geographical generalisations. Arab geographers, like scholars of other branches of study, were dependant for their knowledge upon the Greeks. But the world which was known to them was much larger than that of the Greeks, who, till the end, possessed but the faintest notion regarding the countries to the east of the Caspian Sea and knew nothing about the eastern shores of Asia to the north of Indo-China. Arab geographers on the other hand described the routes to the sources of the Irtysh and the Enissey and the littoral above Korea. Notwithstanding this the Arabs continued to repeat the geographical notions of the Greeks just as in Europe, even after over two hundred years of the discovery of the sea route to India and China, the map of Asia was being prepared on the model of Ptolemy. For the Arab scholars, as for the Greeks, only a fourth of the globe was inhabited. They still held to

the ancient idea that it was impossible for human beings to live in very hot countries though Arab navigators had visited places in Africa situated to the south of the Equator, such as Zanzibar and the Island of Madagascar. The inhabited part of the earth was divided, as by the latest Greek geographers, into seven climes or zones stretching from the south to the north and within the boundaries of the middle or the fourth clime were included the chief cultural centres of the Mussulman world, such as Bagdad, Ispahan and other towns. It was quite natural, that for educated Mussulmans as for their precursors, and later for the Europeans, the civilisation of their epoch was the last and ultimate result of the cultural strivings of mankind, for the enjoyment of which they had been chosen, as it were, by Nature herself. According to the Arabs the middle or the fourth zone, equidistant as it was from the very hot and the very cold lands, afforded the most appropriate advantages for the activity of man and was predestined to be the most cultured part of the world.

The achievements of science could not but react on the cultural level of society. Arabs began to make the distinction between scholars (*a'lim*),



specialists in one of the sciences, and the educated man (*adīb*) who is acquainted with the latest results in all the sciences. Talented popularisers began to make their appearance. Side by side with the older masters of form there appeared poets with ideas, though, according to the Mussulmans, "eloquence" remained for all times the principal characteristic of Arab literature, and "ideas" the distinctive trait of the Persian. Generally speaking Arab poetry never enjoyed that popularity nor exercised that influence on the poetry of other peoples as the Persian. The cultural superiority of the Mussulmans was shown in their governmental organisation whether in war or peace. As early as the IXth century mention is made of an Arab military instructor in Byzantium who not having received his promised reward, deserted to the Bulgarians, who were then pagans. Thanks to him they gained their first victory over the Greeks (811 A.D.). During the same century pilgrims from Western Europe asserted that their life and property were more secure in Mussulman countries than in their own. Nevertheless, the rise in the cultural level conduced comparatively little to the softening of manners or to the change of social conditions or

governmental management. It is true that the philosophers knew the theories of Plato and Aristotle and some of them, like Farabi, wrote political brochures, but they dealt with quite an abstract ideal of a well-organised city far removed from the realities of actual life. We might take as an example the theory of Farabi regarding the organisation of administration. According to him if all the qualities essential for a ruler are found united in one person that person should be entrusted with power, but, failing that, it would be necessary to create a commission of several persons possessing these qualities collectively.

In the same way as formerly there took place in the public squares of civilised towns cruel scenes of men being put to death, a custom, which, as we know, was being sanctioned by public opinion in Western Europe until the beginning of the XIXth century. The inhabitants of large towns were not trusted by the rulers. Harun-al-Rashid, in spite of the tales of *A Thousand and One Nights*, rarely visited Bagdad. His son Mutassim (833-842) and the succeeding Caliphs built for themselves and their bodyguards a new capital at Samarra on the Tigris, three days' journey from Bagdad. Like Mansur's city, Samarra was built on the site of a

former Christian monastery from which the land was bought for the new caliphal town Samarra is a rare example of a large town growing up in a short time. It was not very wide but its length from north to south stretched for more than 15 versts along the banks of the Tigris. A number of buildings were constructed there by Mutassim and his successor Wasîq (842-847) who according to Arab writers transformed the "military camp" of Mutassim into a "large town". The only remains that have come down to us are those of Mutassim's palace and the cathedral mosque of Mutavakkil (847-861). It was at Samarra that a mausoleum was built for the first time for the Caliphs. Till then, in the manner of the Prophet, they had been buried without pomp, usually at the very spot where they had died. Importance was now being attached to the last resting place of the Caliphs. The body of Mutamid (870-892), who towards the end of his rule had again made Bagdad his capital, was carried for burial to Samarra. After the IXth century Samarra was never again destined to become an important centre and therefore the ruins of the town of Mutassim and his successors are intact till this day, whilst Mansur's town has totally disappeared.

At the end of the IXth century when the Caliph again decided to reside in it, Bagdad had become a huge town with an area of 4,375 desyatins towards the east and 2,916½ desyatins on the western bank of the Tigris. A third of the eastern part of the town was occupied by the caliphal palace, quarters for the royal servants and barracks for the bodyguards. This part became known as *harin* or the "forbidden place," though quite near to the palace was situated the cathedral-mosque which was open to all the inhabitants. At this epoch it was not the only one of its kind in the town. During the XIIth century there were eleven such mosques at Bagdad, of which eight were on the western and three on the eastern side. After the fall of the Caliphate the palace of the Caliphs at Samarra and Bagdad served as a model to a number of ruling dynasties from Cordova to Bukhara.

Notwithstanding the development of town life the land revenue formed the basis of the financial system of the Caliphate. Both Mussulman law and public opinion were hostile to taxes on industry or trade. Nevertheless, these were levied everywhere and in the word "*tarif*" (Arabic significance, definition) we see another instance of the

influence of the Mussulmans on Europe. The government did not always take measures to establish the identical system for the maintenance of law and order as laid down by religion over all the area under Mussulman rule. Under Islam, as in former times, Egypt was treated differently from the other countries because all the land there was considered state property. In none of the Mussulman territories were there laws laying down serfdom such as obtained in Europe, which consisted in attaching the peasant to a particular land or to particular owners. No one interfered with a peasant who left the land he had been cultivating. The landowners, too, had the right of taking the land away from one peasant and handing it over to another if the latter bade higher. In many of the Mussulman countries there obtained a kind of feudal system which consisted in the supply of land or income from land to the overlords, but never of human beings as was the case during the Middle Ages in Western Europe and up to the XIXth century in Russia.

In Persia and Turkestan, as we shall see in the next chapter, Islam brought in its wake the development of town life, the disintegration of the caste system and of large landed properties. The same

took place in Armenia. However, in the countries which only adopted the Arabic tongue, from Spain to Mesopotamia, there was no sudden change in the social conditions nor was there a marked rise in the numbers and size of towns. The position of the peasant with regard to the state remained as heretofore but he became less dependent on the landowner. In these countries, however, under Islam as well as in pre-Islamic times, private property of land did not have the same importance as in Persia. Probably it is owing to this that cultural progress in the Arab world stopped earlier than in Persia, and the independent contribution of the Arabian people was less significant in spite of the fact that their territories were to a much lesser degree laid waste by the invasions of barbarians. During the forties of the Xth century the Caliphs of Bagdad were deprived for a long time of worldly power. Both at Bagdad and in Persia, first under the rule of the Persians and later under a Turki dynasty, there commenced a period of upheaval and darkness. The decline of Bagdad as a town did not begin until the XIth century and in the XIIIth century its size had largely decreased. According to some reports

one of the former suburbs lay at that period at a distance of two miles from the town. The same epoch witnessed the highest point of development of the Ommeyyad Caliphate in Spain and the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt. As early as the second half of the IXth century Cairo commenced to overshadow Bagdad. The name "Cairo" was given to the new town founded by the Fatimids at some distance to the north of ancient Fustat. It was smaller than the latter in size. Even after the town had been enlarged in the XIth century it only contained an area of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  square versts. Though during a long period waste land lay between Fustat and Cairo these two towns were considered as one. Travellers of the XIth century described in highly coloured language the brilliance of the Fatimid Court, the full blown prosperity of the capital and the entire state, the patronage by the rulers and their ministers of the arts and sciences as well as the wealth of the libraries. Yet Cairo of the Xth century exercised almost no influence on Mussulman culture. The Fatimid Caliphs claiming their descent from Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, were Shiites and as the rivals of the Bagdad Sunnis engaged in widespread propaganda of their faith far

beyond the boundaries of their own country. Their missionaries preached the doctrines of the Ismailis, a branch of the Shu'its, who believed in seven legitimate Imams as the rightful successors of the Prophet, the last of them being Ismail who had lived under the first Abbasids. But the dogmas of Shi'ism and Ismailism were formulated not at the Court of the Fatimids but in Persia. In Egypt itself Shi'it propaganda did not have any durable results and immediately after the fall of the dynasty the country reverted to Sunnism. In Syria, however, which had also belonged to the Fatimids and which had also been subjected to Shi'it propaganda from Persia, Sunnism met with opposition not only from the rulers but from the popular masses. To the theological science (dogmatics and jurisprudence) Egypt, North Africa and Spain did not contribute anything original but gradually accepted the systems elaborated in Hither Asia which were considered during a long time as absolutely unchangeable. In North Africa the unprogressive Malakite school became prominent and many scholars have attributed to this fact the cultural decadence of that part of the Mussulman world. At Cairo under the Fatimids observatories were erected and



astronomical tables compiled, but all that was done at this epoch for the perfection of astronomical observations and calculations really came from Persia. Although during the XIIIth century Egypt and Syria, owing to the victories of the Egyptian Sultans, were saved from the Mongols and Persia was devastated, still the latter country remained the chief centre of cultural progress and even exercised influence upon Egypt. It was during this period that the Arabic terms employed in the administration of Egypt were replaced by Persian equivalents. During the XIII-XVth centuries Egypt lived through an intense period of architectural activity but in this sphere, too, Persia, according to art historians, seems to have influenced Egypt more than the former country influenced the latter. In the quantitative production of literature, Egypt under Islam, in the same way as in former times, was superior to other Eastern countries. Her dry climate contributed to the preservation of a number of official documents which, together with the historical and the historico geographical compilations, enables scholars to make use of a larger material for the study of the history of Egypt than that of any other Mussulman land. But as for influence Egypt

yielded to Bagdad and latterly to Persia in the same way as in ancient times she had yielded to Babylonia. The same tendency towards compilation in science and imitation in literature obtained in Syria, where there was an outburst of poetry in the Xth century at the Court of the Hamdanids. The only original poet and thinker of the country, a pessimist, abul-Ala-Ma'arri, lived a century later. In North Africa and especially in Spain, Arab poetry and some branches of science, notably history, persisted after the period of their first blossoming until the second half of the Middle Ages, but these writers and scholars did not produce original works and therefore exercised but little influence on the cultural life of their co-religionists. Ibn-Rushd (European Averroes) during the XIIth century carried on in Spain the researches of the philosophers of the Bagdad period, with this difference that he strove to reinstate the doctrines of Aristotle in their purity, although he cannot be said to have succeeded in disengaging them from the admixture of neo-Platonism. The teachings of Ibn-Rushd found more disciples in Catholic Europe than amongst the Mussulmans and it was on the basis of his teachings that the heresy was founded against which St. Thomas

Aquinas had to fight. In Sicily the principal achievements of Mussulman culture belonged to the period of the Christian kings. In 1154 an entire commission under the chairmanship of the Arab savant, Edrisi, constructed for Roger II, the Norman king of Sicily, a silver globe and produced an important work on geography, the data for which, as far as the Asiatic countries were concerned, were taken from the geographers of the Xth century.

In many of the Arab territories, especially in Egypt, the state accorded material support to scientists and scholars but their work was valued less than that of officials. We come to this conclusion because the sums assigned for culture formed but an insignificant item of the budget. In the Arab world, as formerly in the Roman Empire, "eloquence" was the only intellectual quality prized in man. Ibn-Attah, a Spaniard of the XIIIth century, reports that it was easy to find a tutor for one's children who was versed in grammar, prosody, arithmetic, the Koran and literature for 60 dirhems per month (*circa* £1½) but, if he happened to be endowed with eloquence, he would not be content with even 1,000 dirhems. The yearly budget of the "House of

Science" founded at Cairo by the Caliph Hakem (996-1021) was only 257 dinars (circa £128½), out of which 90 were spent on paper for the copying of manuscripts and 63 on the emoluments of the librarian and the personnel.

At the end of the XIVth century in North Africa there lived the statesman and historian, Ibn-Khaldun, who afterwards settled in Egypt. His famous *Prolegomena to Universal History* was the first and only attempt amongst the Arabs to replace the narrative method by the pragmatic as well as to establish the laws of historical process. History, in the way that he understood it, was a "new science." His theories were wholly independent of the pragmatic history of the Greeks. The Arab historian had the advantage of a much wider historical experience than the Greek; instead of the change in political forms, which constituted the guiding principle of the latter, he based his theory upon the changes in the conditions of economic life, transitions from the nomadic to the settled state, from village to town life. It is not yet known what teachers and books influenced the doctrines of Ibn-Khaldun. Like many theorists of antiquity and even of our own times, he was not in a position to apply his

theories to the facts of history as they actually were and hence his brilliant introduction like that of Diodorus formed "a beautiful façade to a commonplace edifice." Besides the *Prolegomena* he engaged in compilations of the usual kind and like all the compilers of the Middle Ages sometimes literally copied the words of his precursors. It is significant that he, a horn Arab, considered that the cultural achievements of Islam were the result of the collaboration of all the Mussulmans taken together and did not identify them with the Arab in whom he saw only the nomad and the destroyer of culture. He, of course, quite justly placed Mussulman culture above all those that had gone before though he was quick to notice the signs of its decline and prophesied its fall. According to him the Arabs never attained any success in the arts, except in poetry, and none at all in political life. It would seem that even when they chose a site for their towns they were guided by the necessities of their nomadic existence as a result of which towns that were founded by them quickly came to an end. In the contemporary life of his mother-country, which, since the introduction of Islam, had never been subjected to invasions by any barbarians except

the Beduins, he notes a hopeless decadence. The destruction of the Asiatic provinces by the Turks and the Mongols, who are often considered in Europe to be the chief culprits responsible for the decline of Mussulman culture, appeared to him to be nothing more than the annihilation of particular towns preparing the passage for the transfer of cultural life to newer centres rather than the cause of the general decadence of Islamic culture.

Shortly afterwards, during the XVth century, Granada, the last citadel of Arab culture in Spain where in a small Arab principedom poetry flowered till the very end and where such a magnificent monument of architectural art as the Alhambra (*al kal atal hamra* the red fortress) was created fell before the conquering Christians. As a courtly structure, built of light material the Alhambra stands unique amongst the Mussulman edifices that have survived to our day. According to art historians some of its motifs show a closer connection between it and the general Mussulman, notably the Mesopotamian, traditions rather than with those of Hispano African origin.

The fall of Granada appeared to her contemporaries as a blow struck at the entire Mussulman

world. Hardly anybody regarded this calamity from the view-point of Arab patriotism. The last event in the history of the Mussulman Middle Ages, where religious interests were identified with the national strivings of the Arabs, was, as far as we know, the re-establishment of the profane power of the Caliphs of Bagdad in the XIIIth century. The people of that town saw in it not only the return to power of the head of Islam but the liberation of the Arabs from the rule of foreigners. The Caliphs, however, did not attempt to unfurl the standard of nationalism and unite under its folds all those territories where the Arab language dominated. It was not in the name of Arab nationalism but of Islam that they demanded from the Sultans the recognition of their paramount rights. The idea of an Arab world monarchy had already been losing ground long before the destruction of the caliphal capital by pagan Mongols in 1258. Thus the fall of Bagdad did not arouse in any part of the world the jubilation that the destruction of Nineveh, Babylon or Rome had once evoked.

---

## CHAPTER IV

### *Persian Culture and its Influence upon other Mussulman Lands*

We know that men of Persian origin were the chief representatives of Mussulman statesmanship and culture even at the period when the sole literary language of the Islamic world was Arabic. It is less clear, however, to what extent their work was the continuation of the cultural life of pre-Muslim Sassanian Persia. With the exception of ancient Babylon, where the Sassanian capital was situated but where the majority of the population was not linguistically Iranian, the lands under Sassanian domination influenced the development of Mussulman religion, politics, and science to a lesser degree than, for instance, Balkh which had never belonged to them and which the Arab conquerors found under the sway of Buddhism. It was from the latter town that the Barmacids, the celebrated ministers of the Caliphs of Bagdad, came as well as a number of men celebrated in the annals of "Arab" scholarship. For the history of



Persian culture the significance of Balkh, together with Babylon, was so great that it was supposed, in all probability wrongly, that the speech of Balkh, in spite of the latter's geographical distance, most resembled that of the Sassanian capital.

The Arab invasion not only annihilated the Sassanian state but dealt a death-blow to the religion and the caste organisation of pre-Islamic Persia. The religion of Zaratbustra claims up to the present day a small number of followers, the so called "Gabrs" or Parsis, but, under the influence of Islam, the idea of monotheism has completely dominated the former beliefs. For the same reason marriage, which is sanctioned by religion, between father and daughter, son and mother and brother and sister, has long ceased. In spite of known facts the Persians, and among them the Gabrs, during the Middle Ages and even in our own times, have been insistently trying to prove that in Persia, even before the advent of Islam, there never existed pagan beliefs or incestuous marital unions. The same kind of patriotic light, often in evident contradiction to facts, has coloured other phases of pre-Islamic Persian life, e.g., the brilliance of the Sassanian Court,

the might of the monarchy, the wisdom of the rulers and ministers, the cultural state of the country, etc. In an attempt to connect in some way or other the cultural works of the Mussulman epoch, even in those cases when they originated from Balkh, with the legcods of the Sassanian state, fantastic genealogies have been invented

Formerly European scholars were inclined to consider the renaissance of Persian nationalism as the direct result of the formation in Persia of hereditary dynasties which for all practical purposes were independent of Bagdad. The idea was that the Persian and even Turki dynasties contributed to the development of Persian nationalism in so far as they succeeded in estranging the people of that country from Bagdad and the Caliphs. This motive used to be imputed to Mahmud (997-1030) of the dynasty of the Ghaznavids, who was Turki by origin, and at whose Court at Ghazor (in Afghanistan) the best writers of Persian poetry, amongst whom Firdausi, the author of the famous epic the *Shah-Nameh*, had taken refuge. In reality, however, the circumstances which contributed to the decadence of the old system and the renewal of life in Persia were much more complicated. During the first

centuries of Islam the Persian aristocrats (*dihkans*), in the same way as at a later period the successors of European feudal lords, became reconciled to the loss of their former political importance in return for the advantages of government service and the preservation of the social and economic privileges for large landed proprietors. Sassanian Persia was for the Arabs the ideal of a well-organised state. As the Arabs themselves believed that the introduction of institutions of the Persian type was calculated to strengthen Islam and its world-power, the Persian councillors of the Caliphs and the viceroys could in all sincerity call themselves orthodox Mussulmans and loyal subjects of the Caliphs. Shism found a favourable soil in Persia but its successes were due not so much to its being a factor in the formation of nationalist sentiment as to its constituting an element of opposition. The town of Kūm became early one of the centres of Shī'it religious fervour (and remains so to the present day) in spite of the fact that the majority of its population was composed of Arabs. At the beginning the aristocrats united with the people for the achievement of common aims. Together with the popular masses, they gathered under the Shī'it leader,

abu-Muslim, fought against the last Ommeyyad Caliphs, but the moment the desired object had been realised they reverted to their original groups according to their different interests. Abu-Muslim was killed and his partisans rose against the government. The representatives of the aristocracy, the Barmacids, continued to serve the Abbasid Caliphs till they fell in their turn a victim to the religious and political reaction of the last days of Harun-al-Rashid's rule. To these reactionary measures and the opposition, which followed in their wake, can perhaps be attributed the outcome of the struggle for political power between Amin and Mamun, the sons of Hsrun-al-Rashid. Mamun raised the standard of Shism but as soon as he had entered Bagdad rejected its green colour for the official black of the sons of Abbas. This decision was arrived at not under the influence of the Arabs but at the instigation of the Persian leader, Tahir, the founder of the dynasty of the Tahirids. These, like the Barmacids before them, took an active part in the conquest, for the Arabs and Islam, of the countries situated to the south of the Caspian Sea, which even under Sassanian power, had succeeded in preserving their independence and their own traditions of living.

Here, too, the popular masses gave up the religion of Zarathustra and adopted Shism, the spread of which was connected with the destruction of the feudal system and of large landed properties. The struggle against the Caliphate and orthodox Islam was accompanied by agrarian revolts. As in Europe, the princes sought support among the masses and helped to raise the "workers on land" against the "owners of land" who were supposed to be the allies of the Arabs.

The situation became still more complicated with the development of town life and the formation of new cultural centres. Of the large Persian towns of the IX-Xth centuries Isphahan is best known to us. Thanks to two geographers, who were natives of this town, we possess a detailed account of the city and its environments. Here we find grouped together all those tendencies, which were then extant in all the important centres of the period. Isphahan is the native town of the Arab patriot and nationalist of the Xth century, the author of the "Book of Songs" (*Kitab-al-agani*) as well as of three of the eight famous translators of the Persian epic in Arabic. In the district of Isphahan a few localities were almost entirely inhabited by "noble *dihkans*," who for

all practical purposes, it seems, had become peasants but in the manner of the Polish \* *shliakht* were ever mindful of their noble descent. They looked with contempt upon the simple folk and contracted marriages only among themselves. In other localities of the same district, where the population was mixed and the lower classes were in the majority, the doctrines of a communist sect found favour, which had arisen during the Sassanian epoch (*vide* p 8) and was renewed under another name in Islamic times.

Those who were engaged in literature and science could not wholly take either the one or the other side. Towards the popular masses and the princes who had emerged from among them or were their partisans, they were friendly because of their hostility to Arahs and orthodox Islam as well as because of their sentiment of Persian nationalism, their sympathy for Shism.

\* *Shliakht* a class which included the smaller nobility of Poland the term extended under Eksterina II to the neighbouring provinces of Russia. The term was used to distinguish the petty nobility from the *dvoryan* who represented the higher nobility. Later on the word *dvoryan* was used for all the different classes of the nobility—Tr

and other heretical teachings. On the other hand, their cultural and class interests compelled them to sympathise with the champions of the aristocratic idea and with social conservatism. Thus, the cultural renaissance of Persia took place under extremely complex conditions, which have not yet been wholly elucidated by scholarly research. The Arabic alphabet was adopted not only by the Mussulmans but also, a little later, by the followers of Zarathustra. A new Persian tongue which included many Arabic words came into being. Monuments of the former literature, not excluding the Holy Books, began to be deciphered with great difficulty and, as has been proved by European scholars, with many mistakes. The poetry of the neo-Persian language made use of some of the pre-Islamic metres,\* but even these were given Arab names and were employed according to the rules of Arab prosody. The Persians have not even preserved any authentic traditions dealing with the beginnings of their poetry. An eulogistic poem by a certain Abbas, which is supposed to have been read before the Caliph Mamun on the occasion of his entry into the city of Merv, is often cited as being the first poem in the new language purely on the evidence that

it contains the assertion that no one before had ever written poetry in that tongue. However, the authenticity of this poem, both with regard to its content as well as its language, which is too elaborate and too similar to that of later poetry, raises great doubts. That a poet of the name of Abbas existed seems to be true. Even ibn-Khordadbek, a geographer of the IXth century who wrote in Arabic, cites the Persian poems of Abbas-ibn-Tarkhan, who was probably the same person as the above-mentioned poet. These poems contain archaic linguistic forms and allusions to quite unknown events in the history of the towns of Samarkand and Shash (Tashkent), which shows that the writer was of Central Asian origin. At the same epoch, at another end of the Iranian world, lived the poet Mohammedi-bn-Ba'is, owner of two fortresses near the Lake Urmī, who wrote verses in Arabic and Persian. His Persian poems, which have not come down to us and which are not mentioned by the historians of Persian literature, enjoyed, according to the testimony of Tabari who himself wrote in Arabic, some popularity in his native country. What is known about the poet himself is that he took part towards the end of Mamun's rule, in an anti-Mussulman



and an anti-Arah revolt in Azerbaijan which was quelled after twenty years and that afterwards, long before the rebellion was crushed, he came over to the side of the Arabs and later once again fought against the Caliphs

The Tahirids (821-873), who laid the foundation of the Mussulman dynasties of Persian origin, according to tradition, were hostile to Persian literature and considered it to be irreconcilable with orthodoxy. But the measures which they took to establish order not only in Khorassan which belonged to them, but in other territories, as for instance, in Egypt (in Bagdad itself where, after the removal of the Caliphs to Samarra, military power to a large extent had passed into the hands of one of the Tahirids) must have contributed to the development of general culture and incidentally of Persian culture. In their time instead of Meiv, Nishapur became the chief town of Khorassan and one of the important cultural centres. To the west of it lay the district of Beikhak with the town of Sabzevar, one of the chief homes of Shiite propaganda, which from the beginning of the IXth century gave a number of important writers and scholars to the Mussulman world. *To the east of Nishapur stood the town*

of Tus, in the suburbs of which, round the nucleus of the tomb of the Shit Imam, who died in 818 A D , arose the city of Meshed, now the chief town of Khorassan

The renaissance of Persian literature owes most to the dynasty of the Samanids (875-999) After a short interruption they succeeded the Tahirids to supreme power in Khorassan as well as in that part of Turkestan which had been conquered by the Mussulmans Bukhara, the Samanid capital, attracted to itself a large number of poets and scholars In the Xth century the countries which came under the domination of this dynasty were considered as amongst the best governed They themselves came originally from Balkh and were Iranians by nationality The official tongue under most of the Samanid rulers was Persian though at their courts they extended their patronage also to those who wrote in Arabic With the exception of a short-lived episode in the forties of the Xth century, when the government was subjected to the influence of Shit propaganda, they were always the champions of orthodoxy It is well known that a catechism was prepared for them in Arabic and was translated into Persian to enable them to defend the masses

against the seductions of "unorthodox" teachings.\*

The comprehensive commentary on the Koran written by the historian Tabari was also translated under them and an original commentary was composed in Persian. Of course, a special sanction by theological authorities was needed so that Persian might be considered, in the same way as Arabic, a suitable language for theological writings. Some theologians went to the extent of asserting that the most ancient Prophets before Ismail, the son of Abraham, the ancestor of the Arabs, spoke in Persian. As late as the XIIth century there were some people who believed that Abraham himself had preached his doctrines at the Court of the Persian kings. Persian poets, who sang in praise of the Samanids, were extremely impious in the light of Mussulman orthodox opinion. Rudeki, a native of Samarkand, who at one time was a popular poet but has since been forgotten, found that there was no sense in turning one's face towards the Ka'ba when the heart

\* *Vide Islam*, by the same author, p 76 St Petersburg.

drew one towards the pagan shrines. One should be content with the doctrines, common to all people, that of love of God ; " Our God accepts from thee the emotion of love but He does not accept *namaz*." The same poet speaks quite frankly of his loyalty towards the Shit Fatimid Caliphs and gives expression to a purely pagan conception of heaven and earth as the father and the mother of mankind. In speaking of the death of one of his contemporaries, Rudekī says " His great soul he returned to the Father, his dark body he gave up to the Mother " The poet Dakikī, who was the first to attempt to put into rhyme the epic legends of the Persian people, openly avows that shovs all things in the world he values wine, the lips of the beloved and the teachings of Zaratustra.

In that same Xth century, because of the weakening of the Caliphate, the warlike rulers of the southern coast of the Caspian Sea began to invade the more cultured provinces of Iran. Some of the leaders of this movement frankly admitted that their aim was to destroy the Caliphate and to re-establish the throne of the Sassanians. To a certain extent one of these Caspian dynasties, the Buīds, succeeded in achieving this aim. They

captured Bagdad and deprived the Caliphate of its temporal power. The title of *shah in-shah* (king of kings) of the pre-Islamic Persian monarchs began to appear on their coins. The Buid state was not subjected to one ruler. Members of the dynasty divided amongst themselves the conquered provinces and supremacy shifted from one branch of the dynasty to another. There was also no permanent capital. That town, where the most powerful prince from amongst them ruled, became for the time being the capital. Notwithstanding the faults of this system of division of power it contributed to the development of town life and to the growth of cultural centres. Each prince was anxious that the town over which he ruled should flourish and tried to attract scholars and writers to his court. Cultural activity gradually shifted from Bagdad and Basra to the large Persian towns of Rei \* (to the south east of Teheran), Isphahan and Shiraz, where books were collected and large libraries founded by the Buid princes. The exact sciences were also patronized by them. We read of an observatory, built under the Buids, at Shiraz, the instruments of which represented an important

\* Rei—Rhagès

step in the direction of astronomical investigations as compared with pre-Islamic times. One of the ministers of the Buïds was in the habit of arranging gatherings of scholars and literary men, one day being reserved for the *faqîhs*, another for connoisseurs of literature, a third for expounders of dogmatic theology and a fourth for philosophers.

As the Buïds did not bring with them any literary traditions from their home near the Caspian Sea, they submitted wholly to the influence of Arabic literature while remaining indifferent to the Persian. No Persian poet belonging to their possessions became famous at a time when Persian poetry was flourishing under the Samanids and under the Ghaznavids, the successors of the Samanids in the Eastern Iranian provinces. The town of Tus in Khorassan gave birth to the celebrated Firdausi, who, chronologically, is the first of the Persian poets whose renown lives up to the present day. He combined in one poem the epic legends of Iran from mythical times till the Arab conquest. Firdausi, as we have seen, had precursors in the Xth century. The epic themes as well as some other forms of pre-Islamic literature had been exploited

by the earlier neo-Persian poets basing their information on Arabic translations rather than on original material. Firdausi's *Shah-Nameh* became the national heritage of the entire Iranian people. As a heroic epic non-Iranians, such as the Armenians, the Georgians and the Turks, who were under the influence of Persia, were also fascinated by it. In the world's literature it occupies a unique position because all the other great peoples had already had the renaissance of their political life at a period when the enchantment of the epic had been killed by bookishness. The Persians of the Sassanian epoch, as well as of the first centuries of Islam, in spite of the great influence of book-learning, were still living in the epic traditions. Under Islam with the development of town life and the ultimate decadence of the knightly caste, the *Shah-Nameh* gave rise to a large number of imitations. The kings of succeeding periods, till the XIXth century inclusively, have been sung of in the style of Firdausi. These works are marked by the same absence of life as the epics of the so-called pseudo-classical movement in Europe, with this difference that the Persian writers of verse have after all been imitating a poet who belongs to their own people.

During Firdausi's lifetime it was not possible to foresee those consequences which the development of book-learning was to have for the epic. As during the Middle Ages in Europe the greatest enemies of the epic in his time were the representatives of religion who could, on no account, sympathise with the glorification of pagan heroes. Though they did not succeed in destroying the renown of this great singer they caused him much sorrow and disillusion during his lifetime. Firdausi took his poem to Mahmud, the Ghaznavid Sultan, though he had finished it a long time before the latter's accession to the throne. The Sultan, being under the influence of religious circles and considering himself a pillar of the orthodox faith, deceived the hopes of the poet who expressed his indignation in a fiery satire worthy of the author of *Shah-Nameh*. Compelled to seek refuge at the courts of other rulers, he was welcomed by nobody, not even by the Buids, champions as they were of Sassanian traditions. Much tried by his hard lot, at the court of one of the Buid princes, he related to verse the Biblical story recounted in the Koran, of Joseph the Beautiful and the love of Potiphar's wife for him. In a poetical foreword Firdausi, already



bowed down with years, disavows his former works and bitterly takes himself to task for the years he had vainly spent in glorifying pagan heroes and their fancied exploits in tales which were not worth "a handful of ashes" Tired and disillusioned he returned to his native town of Tus long forgotten by those who governed there but not by the divines, who could not forgive him till the end, and after his death, refused him the right to be buried in a Mussulman graveyard

Thus during the Xth century and in the beginning of the XIth Persian literature flourished principally in the eastern provinces of Iran, while Persian scholars, who wrote almost exclusively in Arabic, found a favourable atmosphere for their work in the western provinces Gradually this geographical disjunction became less marked as the different provinces of the country became more closely united to one another At that period scholarship was not limited to specialisation as in modern Europe A man could take up successfully several branches of learning and at the same time devote his leisure hours to the pursuit of literature A scholar of this type was the celebrated ibn Sina (European Avicenna), who was also a poet He was born in 980 A D in one of

the Bukhara villages and served at the courts of the Buid princes at Hamadan and Isphahan. In the former town he occupied for some time the post of vizir. In his early childhood he had learnt the Koran and the letters with the local schoolmaster. With the advent of Ismailit propaganda at Bukhara (*vide* above) he gained a knowledge of philosophy and metaphysics. At the age of 18 he was already familiar with all the sciences including medicine, which he considered to be the easiest, but which more than all the others has brought him renown. He experienced the utmost difficulty in studying the metaphysics of Aristotle much of which he mastered with the help of a treatise by Farabi, which he bought by mere chance at the hazar for three dirhems. His knowledge of medicine enabled him to get an entry into the court of the Samanid ruler and his library, which it seems had never been used by any one else before him. At the beginning of the XIth century he left Bukhara, probably because of the destruction of the Samanid state and the conquest of the country by the Turks, and wandered over to Khorezm, to the provinces of the Caspian Sea, to Khorassan and West Persia. It was his medical knowledge that gained him the friendship of the Buid princes.

Among the colossal works compiled by him with the help of his pupils we find a compendious book of medical "canons," a term used in the Mussulman world, not, as in Europe, to signify a body of religious but of profane laws. As in Byzantium it was sometimes applied to learned encyclopaedias as if they were a kind of "legislative code" of the sciences. The medical title of "*Kitab ash Shafa*," the Book of Healing, is given to another work which in reality deals with logic, physics, metaphysics, astronomy and theology. For the Prince of Isphahan he compiled, with the help of his pupils, an encyclopaedia of different sciences in the Persian language. The first place in it is given to logic which is followed by an exposition of the fundamentals of the "higher knowledge" (metaphysics and theology) and of the "lower knowledge" (natural science). After these he deals with the sciences which are classed as the *quadrivium* (see end of Chapter II). Among his many works there are medical treatises written in Arabic verse and Persian quatrains of mystical content. During the last years of his life he was studying Arabic philology. His wide scientific and literary occupations did not prevent him from leading an extremely unbridled

life He died in 1037 A D. not having yet attained his sixtieth year. Though he was not an independent worker in any one branch of science, he was able to master the entire scientific knowledge of his epoch and to expound it in an intelligible and artistic form It was due to this quality of his works that they acquired such wide popularity in the Mussulman world and later in Europe. In Persia the recrudescence of philosophical teachings in the XVIIth century, which lasted till the XIXth, was based upon his works. Religious circles and the simple folk came to regard *ibn-Sina* as the chief exponent of impious philosophising and, like *Dr Faust* of the Middle Ages, a kind of wizard

Quite a different type of scholar was his contemporary *abu-Reihan-Biruni* (973-1048), who was in correspondence with him about several scientific subjects, a correspondence which sometimes took on a sharp polemical turn *Biruni* was born in *Khorezm* where he became the councillor of the local prince and continued living there till after his fortieth year, interrupted only by a stay of a few years at *Jurjan* (ancient *Hirkan*) to the south-east of the Caspian Sea) and by travels which, as far as we know, extended to *Rei* Later on he lived at the

court of Mahmud and his successors at Ghazni from where he undertook several journeys to India. Unfortunately we do not know the exact dates of the works of this, the greatest of Arabic scholars (in the sense that he wrote in the Arabic language), author of the 'incomparable' (quoting the words of a contemporary European specialist), astronomical canons, of a compendious work on the chronological system of all the peoples and of an account of India remarkable for its breadth of view and scientific objectivity, dealing chiefly with the Indian sciences and religion, which he learnt from the original Sanskrit sources.

Biruni was well acquainted with the works of the scholars of the Bagdad and Basra schools, but he regarded them as out of date. He qualified Jahiz, the most popular Basra scholar of the IXth century as "naive". Biruni himself was no reformer in astronomy or mathematics. Like his other contemporaries he continued believing in astrology. From his books we find that before his time there had been several efforts to modify the accepted notions regarding these sciences. The scholar abu-Said Sejezi had made an astrolabe based on a hypothesis about the movement of the earth and the repose of the heavenly vault. Biruni

did not quite side with the view geuerally accepted in his time and considered it to be a question which was "doubtful" and "difficult of solution" Much after him an Arab scholar of the XIVth century wondered what difficulty Biruni could have experienced at a period when the mistake about the hypothesis of the movement of the earth had been clearly proved by *ihn-Sina* and his precursor, the physician and astronomer *Razi*, who had died in 932 A D

Much more interesting for contemporary readers are the opinions of Biruni on foreign religious beliefs, notably the Indian He understood that everywhere religious beliefs are subjected to the influence of identical psychological motives ; everywhere the distinction is forcibly marked between the articles of faith of the popular masses and those of the chosen He expounds religious teachings without any polemical sting and as far as possible preserves the authentic expressions of the followers of those religions If one religion is treated in relation to another, it is only in order to apply the scientific comparative method and bring out in relief the substance of the creeds and the leading idea on which they are based In Mussulman literature scientific tolerance and

objectivity with regard to religion was no novelty at the time of Biruni and therefore his work, as far as that is concerned, is in no way exceptional. Already in the IXth century Yakubi in his historical book had expounded with exactitude and in detail with the same amount of objectivity the contents of the Christian Holy Books. At the end of the IXth century at that same Ghaznavid Court was written "*The Book of Faith*" in the Persian language. Biruni himself speaks in laudatory terms of the books of his teacher Iranshehry (whose works have unfortunately not come down to us nor have we any information about his life) dealing with the religions of the Christians, Jews and Manichaeans. He says that when Iranshehry was describing the peoples of India he had been led to make mistakes because he had believed in data supplied by persons who did not sufficiently know the Indian religions. Because of the wealth of collected material and the thoroughness with which scientific methods were applied, Biruni's works occupy an absolutely exceptional place in the Mussulman literature that is known to us, although in these works we sometimes find the infatuated Iranian patriot speaking about the pre-Islamic culture of Iran and the destruction which was brought about in the wake of the Arab

conquest According to his religious beliefs Biruni was a Shii and like many other educated Iranians sympathised with Manichaeism In politics he did not attempt to suggest any reforms Union between the ruling power and religion or, to use a modern terminology, between the state and the church, which Ghaznavid governments had always been trying to realise, appeared to him the highest ideal of political organisation, the limit of all human desires Biruni's language, which is extremely difficult to understand, stood in the way of his popularity For a long time scholars paid a merited homage to his works which, however, exercised little influence on the masses They were unknown to the Europeans till the XIXth century in spite of the fact that one of his books, dealing with the astronomical tables, had been translated into Hebrew as early as the XIIth century by the Spanish Jew, Ahraam-ben-Ezra Biruni himself said that he wrote for scholars and not for the general reader His scholarly activity was less varied than that of Ibn-Sina, but he, too, besides his scientific works, translated into Arabic the Persian stories and composed Arabic verses, though according to himself, his literary productions were written merely for the sake of amusement



It is usual to attribute to the XIth century the highest point to which Mussulman culture has ever attained as well as the beginnings of its decline. As a matter of fact, progress in many of the branches of cultural life, in any case in Persia continued during a few centuries more. In the XIth century life everywhere ultimately passed from the “*shahristans*” or towns of the old type to the suburbs, which had grown up under Islamic rule, and the type of the town described in foregoing pages was finally established. Nevertheless, the towns did not grow to the size that they assumed at a later time. The largest town of the XIth century was Isphahan which occupied a space of about 10 versts in circumference. Building technique had just begun to be developed. The oldest surviving dated edifice of Mussulman Persia, built in 1006-1007, the Mausoleum of the Jurjan Prince Kabus-ibn Vashmgir,\* is attributed to the beginning of the XIth century. It was constructed according to a type which was

\* A detailed description of the mausoleum is given in the *Minutes of the Amateurs of Archæology in Turkestan* (V anno 1900) by I. T. Poslavy, *Is poyezdki na r. Atrek i r. Gurgan* (Travel notes from the rivers Atrek and Gurgan).

largely current in the territories along the Caspian Sea and in the Caucasus and even applied to church architecture, viz., a many-faceted body with a conical top. In the Arab inscription on the mausoleum it is called a castle (*qasr*), a term applied, in some of the localities in Persia, as for instance at Isphahan, to structures built over tombs in graveyards. It is now called "cupola" (*gumberz*) by the inhabitants of the place. The use of one term for the other was probably due to the fact that the former type was thrust out by mausoleums capped with cupolas, one of the early edifices of the second type is the tomb of Sultan Sanjar at Merv which was built during the first half of the XIIth century and supports a flat cupola. The mausoleum of Kahus is 25 *sajen* \* high with massive brick walls about 4 *arshina* † thick. In the succeeding centuries such an extravagance would have been unthinkable. Generally speaking the brick of the earliest edifices is superior in quality to that of the later ones. Besides it is much larger in size. Brick was being employed to a much lesser degree at the earlier epoch. Latterly,

\* *Sajen* = 7 feet.

† *Arshina* = 29 inches.

as in modern European towns, one had to be reconciled with a poorer quality of material for the sake of economy.

The history of Mussulman architecture in Persia has not yet been written and still requires a number of preparatory works for its final elucidation. The general type of the Persian mosques at the time of the Buïds is not known to us. We are equally ignorant as to what type of building was meant by Nasir Khusrau, the Persian author of the XIth century, when he wrote that in all the territories the Shint mosques were characterised by a special kind of beauty. No little influence on the synthetisation of the different provincial types, if that ever took place, and generally on the exchange of cultural values, must have been exercised by the successors of the Central Asian Turkî dynasties, the Seldjukids, who, in the XIth century, had conquered the whole of Persia and had gradually, though for a short period, united under their hegemony the whole of Mussulman Asia from the Mediterranean and the Red Seas to the frontiers of China.

At the end of the Xth century people were expecting the western part of Iran to be invaded by the eastern. Notwithstanding the services rendered to culture by some of the Buïd

princes and their patronage of science and philosophy, they were looked upon as leaders of the Caspian barbarians, as destroyers of order, prosperity and decorum when compared to their contemporaries, the Samanids. From the east, from Samanid Khorassan, a king was awaited who would be a "philosopher and a scholar" and who would succeed in restoring order in the west. These expectations were not quite realised. Instead of the scholarly king there came to the west a chieftain of a nomadic tribe, which stood at a much lower rung of culture than the tribesmen of the Buids. The Seldjukids remained illiterate even after a century's supremacy over Persia. After the fall of their government in the XIIth century political power passed to a number of small dynasties, the majority of which were of Turki origin. Nevertheless, the conquest of Persia by the Seldjukids afforded a larger area for cultural activity not only to the theologians and poets of Khorassan, but to the exponents of the political traditions of the Samanid and the Ghaznavid epochs. One of them, the vizir Nizam-al mulk, a native of Tus, was for a long time (1064-1092) the all powerful ruler of the entire spacious Seldjukid Empire.

During this epoch measures were adopted for the further development of town life, commerce

and industry. Structures were completed, some of which survive to the present day in western Persia. New towns appeared surrounded by walls made of burnt brick. Persian poets received patronage at the Courts of the Seldjukids and even greater favour with the dynasties that replaced them. The first Seldjukid Sultan was presented in 1048 with a versified love-story, *Vis and Ramin*, translated into neo-Persian from Pehlevi, a language almost wholly forgotten at that time, by Fakir-ud-din Asad. According to the latter "not everyone can read well the books that are written in this language (that is, Pehlevi) and if he does manage to read them he does not understand the sense." Two of the poets of the XIIth century, the panegyrist Anwarī, who had written most of his works for Sultan Sanjar and Nizami, the author of versified romances who had lived and died in the Caucasian town of Gyanja (Ehsavetopol), are counted by the Persians themselves amongst the greatest poets of their language. Nizami is placed by some European scholars only next to Firdausi. His works exercised an important influence not only on Persian but on Turkish poetry.

The Seldjukids established in Persia the hegemony of the orthodox faith but they did not succeed in destroying Shism. The period beginning with the XIth and ending in the XIIth century was for Persia one of ruthless religious struggles, the details of which have not yet been wholly elucidated. Ismailit propaganda took a new direction at the end of the XIth century. The Ismailites took possession of fortified castles in all the territories of Iran and even in Syria. This last fact proves that the movement did not wear an exclusively national character. Apparently caste interests played a larger rôle. The fight that was now being waged was not between the owners of land and the workers on land as in the IXth century but between fortified castles and towns. The Ismailites received the greatest amount of support in those localities where town life had been least developed, especially, in the south western portion of Khorasan, the so called Kohistan, where two-thirds of the Ismailit castles were to be found and the mountains to the north of Kasvin where stood the fortress Alamut, the seat of the chief of the sect. The fight assumed an exclusively brutal character in Fars where under Islam some large towns had grown up side by side with many

castles and in the suburbs of Isphahan. The Ismailits met their enemies not only in open fight but had them destroyed by means of secret murders. The chief of the sect had at his command a powerful organisation of self-sacrificing men whom he sent to kill the victims that had been previously marked out with absolute faith in their power of accomplishing the task with which they had been entrusted. The fanaticism of the sectarians was traced to the use of *hasheesh* (European "assassin" is derived from the word *hashishion*, i. e., those who use *hasheesh*). This supposition shows to what extent the organisation of the Ismailits had impressed the Europeans of the Middle Ages. However, in the Ismailit castles not only secret murders were prepared but cultural successes were achieved. The library and observatory of Almut were well-renowned. From these very castles originated several scholars, who later played a great rôle during the Mongol period in Persia, as for instance, Nasiruddin Tusi, author of many works on philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and Shint theology or the family of Jewish doctors from the town of Hamadan to which the famous historian Rashid-ud-din belonged.

Though they did not possess a continuous territory, the Ismailit community represented a political force of considerable importance. At the beginning they worked in union with the Egyptian Caliphs in whose name Ismailit propaganda was spread. At the end of the XIth century, however, they broke with the Fatimids and a hundred years later we see an understanding being established between these heretics and the chief protagonists of Islamic orthodoxy, the Abbasid Caliphs, in the name of a common enmity towards the Sultanate. We are not quite sure whether Ismailit propaganda had influenced the civil wars, which took place in the XIIIth century at Rei and Isphahan and their suburbs, on the very eve of the Mongol invasion. There had been fighting not only between the Shi'ites and the Sunnis but between the followers of two Sunni sects, the Hanafis and the Shafis. The greater part of the agricultural population upheld the cause of the Shi'ites whereas the majority of the townspeople belonged to the Hanafis and the minority to the Shafis. Notwithstanding this distribution the Shafis overcame all their adversaries at Rei. It would seem that under the guise of religion the real fight that was taking place was between the town and the village, between the aristocratic and the democratic elements of the town population.



As far as we can judge such questions from the paucity of material at our disposal at the present moment it appears that the popular masses and their cultured leaders were quite indifferent at this epoch to political or national ideas. Apart from struggles for class or caste supremacy we notice a tendency towards securing the prosperity of particular towns and territories. We come across an ever-increasing number of historical compilations dealing with particular towns or localities. Not only the idea of a pan-Mussulman, but even that of an Iranian, state is more or less giving place to regionalism especially after the decline of the Seldjuk Empire. The notion, that the prosperity of each territory depended upon the fact that revenues collected from amongst its inhabitants were on no account to be carried outside its boundaries, was accepted as an irrefutable doctrine. In other words there was a tendency against the union of a group of territories under a single governmental régime. Even from a military point of view the advantages of large composite states were underrated in comparison with smaller political entities. Thus, when in the beginning of the XIIIth century, Sultan Muhammad, the Khorezmshah, the ruler of Khorezm, succeeded in uniting under his sceptre part of Central

Asia and the whole of Iran, the historian ibn-al-Asir wrote that it was due to this that the Mongol victories were facilitated. If there had remained, as formerly, a number of rulers, the Mongols would have had to conquer each one of them separately. Because of the Khorezmshah, the Mongols, after defeating him, met no enemies to bar their progress.

Notwithstanding the strengthening of local particularism the development of town life could not help influencing the land and sea-borne trade within and without the country. Sea-borne trade between India and China was instrumental in acquiring prosperity to the town of Ormuz and the Island of Kais situated where the Persian Gulf mingles with the Indian Ocean. The caravan trade between Khorezm and the valley of the Volga in the Xth century resulted in the conversion of the inhabitants of the latter territory to Islam, though apparently, at a later date, the trade relations became less important. In the Xth century from the land of the Bulgars \* and their neighbours, furs, products of the bee-hive industry, such as honey

\* Bulgars or Bolgars—the inhabitants of the Volga region at the time of the advent of Islam—Tr.

and wax, and slaves were being exported. The town named Bulgar on the Volga was then an insignificant hamlet with huts made of reeds and tents of felt. At the time of the Mongol invasion it had become a stone-built town with a population numbering no less than 50,000 and with specific industries such as leather, which later was inherited by the Russians. "Bulgar boots" were objects of export and used to be well-known in Turkestan. It was through the Bulgars of the Volga that Arab and Persian merchants carried on trade with Russia, for, as far as we know, they never came directly in contact with the latter. As early as the Xth century Russians had been undertaking devastating excursions into Mussulman territories, and had destroyed Barda, in the valley of the Kur, which was at that epoch, for the number of its inhabitants, the first town of the Caucasus. Later on, in the wake of the Bulgars, the Russians too used to travel for commercial purposes to the 'Khvalim' or the 'Khvalin' sea, i.e., the Khorezm sea, by which name they knew the Caspian, and farther to the town of 'Orantch' i.e., Gurgantch or Urgentch, the capital of Khorezm. Of the agricultural products Russian flax was well-known in the East. In the Xth century Islam spread

by means of these trade relations without any help from Mussulman arms towards the east among the Turki nomads and to some of the towns of what is now called Chinese Turkestan. Thus, the Turki conquerors who at the end of the Xth century invaded Mussulman territories, had already been converted to Islam. In the succeeding centuries Mussulman traders penetrated still farther towards the east. At the beginning of the XIIIth century trade between Mongolia and China was in their hands, and we find Mussulmans figuring in the general headquarters of Chenghiz Khan before the latter had begun his campaign of conquests. These successes, however, of Mussulman trade were not accompanied, as in Turkestan and on the Volga, by religious propaganda. Already in the VIIIth century there existed Manichaean and Christian literature in the Chinese language, whereas, Islamic literature only came into being in the XVIIth century, though, probably even in the VIIIth century, the number of Mussulmans there was not less than that of Manichaeans and Christians. In Mongolia even at a later epoch there were no converts to Islam though we are told that there were peoples that had accepted Manichaeism (already in the VIIIth century) and

Christianity (in the XIth century) The Iranian Muslims were for the Turks and the Mongols the leaders of trade and culture The term borrowed at one time by the Turks from India, *viz* , *sart*, *sartak* or *sartaul* meaning a ' trader ' began to be popularly applied by them and the Mongols to the Iranians who led a settled life Mongol legend created at a later date the figure of the popular hero\* Sartaktai (*tai* is a particle added to popular names to indicate the masculine gender) who had built roads and had dug up canals

Apparently commerce with non-Muslim countries was exclusively placed on a bullion basis At the beginning of the XIth century the trade with Southern Russia was based on silver and silver coins from the Islamic territories were brought into Russia in large quantities Latterly the silver monetary system, which had been inherited by the eastern territories from the Sassanian state, gave place to gold At the end of the XIth century we notice a silver crisis in the Muslim world spreading from the East to the West Instead of the silver dirhems, brass dirhems began to be coined They were in the nature of an obligation currency

\* Russian *Bogatir* Oriental *Bahadur*—Tr

which could not be employed outside the borders of the state, where they were coined. In the western part of Asia including the possessions of the Caliphs of Bagdad, the minting of silver coins had been established already in the XIIth century. The Mongol conquerors, however, found brass dirhems when their invasion spread towards the East. The sources that we have at our disposal do not mention the influence of the disintegration of the monetary system on the economic life of the peoples and especially on trade.

---

## CHAPTER V

### *The Mongol Conquest and its Influence on Persian Culture*

Mussulman traders were the first councillors of Chenghiz Khan and actively helped him during his campaign against the Mussulman world, which was brought about by the deeds of Sultan Muhammad. The latter's viceroy had robbed a caravan from Mongolia at the boundary-town of Ortar in Turkestan and the traders, numbering four hundred and fifty, all of them Mussulmans, who were accompanying the caravan, were massacred (1218). The Mongols conquered Turkestan and Khorezm during the year 1220-1221, but in Hither Asia they had to renew on several occasions their warlike operations and Bagdad fell to them only in 1258. The Mongol Empire came into existence and included, beside Iran, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor; Turkestan was under the rule of another branch of the Chenghizids. The Mongols, at the same time as they crushed the power of the Sultan and the Caliph, destroyed the Ismailit fortress castles and did not allow the construction of new ones. In Southern Persia the local

dynasties voluntarily submitted to the Mongols and were only deprived of their power in the XIVth century. Fars and Kirman were not looted by the Mongols and in the chief towns, especially Shiraz, life followed its former course. It was thus that Fars began to acquire at this period that importance for Persian culture which it had never possessed before. The dynasty of the Salgurids, which survived the Mongol conquest, and of the Muzaffarids, who ruled about half a century after the decline of the Mongol power, were patrons of Persian poetry. With the former dynasty is connected the name of the poet Sa'di (XIIIth century) and with the latter that of Hafiz (XIVth century). The works of these poets, especially of Hafiz, which till now have not lost their fragrance, have been read and studied in succeeding epochs in all those countries where Mussulman culture has penetrated. Shiraz gave to the Mussulman world the great astronomer Kuthb-ud-din (died in 1310) who tried to discover new methods for the study of his science and the great architect Kavam-ud-din (died in 1439), the builder of the Mosque of Ganhar Shah at Meshed, which is considered by some art historians as being superior to all the other monuments of Persian architecture.

It would be a mistake, however, to consider that



cultural life could only continue in those localities which had escaped the inroads of the Mongol troops. It is true that a cultured land had been conquered by a wild people still believing in the efficacy of human sacrifice. When a town was taken, except for the artisans who were needed by the conquerors, the inhabitants were sometimes subjected to total massacre. People, who had survived these horrible experiences, naturally thought that the country will not arise again for another thousand years. Influenced by the opinion of writers contemporary to that epoch, European scholars have believed that the Mongols dealt a heavier and more devastating blow to the cultural life of Asia and Eastern Europe than, for example, was dealt to the cultural life of Southern Europe by the Great Migration of Peoples. In reality, the results of the Mongol invasion were less annihilating than is supposed even if for the fact that the conquerors did not take up their abode in the conquered countries. Beside a not numerous military contingent the Mongol Khans brought with them their cultured counsellors who helped them to establish their rule and to apply to the new country that harmonious and well constructed governmental and military organisation which had been elaborated at

the time of Chenghiz Khan himself. In all the territories which had been conquered by the Mongols,—China, the Mussulman world and Russia,—we notice after the XIIIth century a greater political stability than before. The Khans were, of course, indifferent to local literature and, before their conversion to Islam, to Mussulman theology, but, for the sake of their own material interests, they helped the reconstruction of town life, industry and trade and accorded their patronage to those branches of science that they considered practical. Amongst these were medicine, mathematics because it contributed to accurate book-keeping and astronomy because of their belief in astrology. The conqueror of Persia, Hulagu, Chenghiz Khan's grandson, built for the astronomer Nasiruddin Tusi an observatory in the town of Meraj in Azerbaijan and equipped it with the best instruments available at the time. Notwithstanding the barbarism of the Mongols their period of rule did not bring about, as under the Germans in Europe, the reversion of the monetary system to that of barter, or of town life to the rural. Tributes were collected in kind, mostly bread and piece-goods, only during the first decades after the death of Chenghiz Khan. His grandsons, however, had become wholly familiar with the mone-

tary system. The gold monetary system was again replaced by the silver but the value of silver was stabilised and gradually the coining of brass dirhems ceased. Not only destroyed towns were reconstructed but new ones built, as for instance Sultania, which was situated between Tebriz and Teheran. It was only under the Mongols that Tebriz, the capital of Azerbaijan, became a large and rich town, second to none of the former towns of Persia. In the XIVth century under the Khans splendid buildings were raised, which testify to the further achievements of Persian architecture, e.g., the Mosques of Sultan Uljeit (1304-1316) at Sultania and of his son abu-Said (1316-1355) at Veramin to the east of Teheran.

The Mongol Empire united, under the rule of one people and one dynasty, the cultured lands of the Far and the Near East, a fact which could not but help commerce and the exchange of cultural values. Caravan trade between Hither Asia and China was developed to a point neither surpassed before nor after. These caravan routes were used also by European merchants, the first of whom were the Venetian Polos. Even after the division of the Empire into a number of states the closest relations were preserved between the Mongol

kingdoms in Persia and China, where scions of one and the same branch of the Chinghizids were rulers. Besides, the Mongol princes contributed to a closer tie between Persia and the Europeans because of their common enmity towards the Mussulman Sultans of Egypt. It is this association which explains the fact that European traders and missionaries made use not only of the caravan routes across Central Asia but of the sea route from the Persian ports to travel into India and China. These trade relations were largely responsible for the cultural progress of Europe in the XIIIth century, though leadership in culture at that time was still with the Mussulman world and especially with Persia. If at any time in their history the Persians have undoubtedly acquired the first place in the cultural life of the world it was when their country was under Mongol rule, a period which has till now been considered by many scholars to have been one of the destruction of culture by barbarians.

European travellers of that time depended as much for their knowledge on their Mussulman precursors and contemporaries as to-day the latter depend on the writings of the former. Marco Polo in describing the territories which he personally visited employs many geographical names in their Persian

forus. Chinese astronomers appeared in Persia during the XIIIth century but of much greater importance was the work of Persian astronomers in China, where the local astronomical studies were wholly subjected to Persian influence, an influence which lasted even after the end of the Mongol supremacy in the XIVth century and continued till the XVIIth century when it yielded to that of the Jesuits from Western Europe. In Byzantium Persian astronomical treatises were translated during the XIVth century into Greek. At the court of one of the Mongol princes of Persia a comprehensive work was planned and partly realised, which aimed at being a sort of a codex of all the historical traditions of all the peoples from the Chinese to the Franks (or Western Europeans), who either formed part of the Mongol Empire or had relations with the Mongols. The fulfilment of this task was entrusted to a Jewish convert to Islam, Rashid-ud-din, and his collaborators consisted of a connoisseur of Mongol traditions, two Chinese savants, a Buddhist hermit from Kashgar, a few Persian scholars and in all probability a French monk. Rashid-ud-din intentionally attempted to expound the historical traditions in the manner in which they were presented by representa-

tives of the various peoples and did not add anything himself nor did he evaluate the authenticity of the material communicated to him. His work, therefore, in the modern sense was not scientifically historical, but because of the comprehensiveness of its plan it occupies an absolutely exceptional place in the literature of the world. Neither before nor after has there ever been a similar attempt to unite in one book the traditions of universal history with the help of the representatives of all the cultured peoples of the Old World. Even in the XIXth century European scholars were inclined to call "universal" history that part of it which dealt only with Western Europe. In Persia, already at the beginning of the XIVth century, as is evident from the words of one of the Mussulman collaborators of Rashid-ud din, it was understood that the history of the Arabs and the Persians is only one of the rivers which falls "into the sea of universal history."

Though the influence of Persia on other lands in the spheres of science, literature and art was not wholly dependent upon her political frontiers, this was certainly the case to some extent. Between the banks of the Volga and those of the Amu Daria, there had long existed close relations which were, as

we have seen, responsible for the conversion of the Volga Bulgars to Islam. But it was only under the Mongols that the banks of the two rivers were included into one and the same state under the rule of the descendants of Djuch, Chinghiz Khan's eldest son. In all probability this fact could not but react on the life of "Great Bulgar," the former capital of the Volga Bulgars, as well as on that of Sarai, the new capital founded by the Mongols. Only recently have we come to know of the existence in the Golden Horde of a poetical literature in Turki which was written under the influence of Persian poetry.

In Turkestan the spread of Islam among the Turki peoples had already begun in the Xth century. A hundred years later the first Mussulman work in Turki was written for a Kasbgar Khan. It was a didactic poem dealing with the duties of rulers, ministers, dignitaries, etc. In ancient times and during the Middle Ages this form of literature, usually in the form of instructions given by a father to his sons, had enjoyed a great deal of popularity among all the peoples. From among the works belonging to the Persian literature of the XIth century a book of this kind, the *Kabus-Nameh*, containing moral instructions written by one of the Caspian

princes for the benefit of his son, was extremely well-known and was at a later date translated into Turki. In Persia and in other countries where literature developed more or less independently, this kind of work is of importance even for modern readers, because the teachings are accompanied by examples taken from actual life or historical facts and anecdotes, etc., are cited. We find no such interest in the Turki work which contains nothing but dry instructions, absolutely independent of the actualities of contemporary life, in the form of a forced allegory in bad taste where justice is represented by the prince, happiness by the minister, etc. It reminds one, because of these traits, of *Theuerdank*, the German work of the end of the XVth century. Though there had existed among the Turki peoples a written literature before their conversion to Islam, the influence of the new religion and of Persian literature was so great that after having accepted Islam they, as it were, lost all memory of their pre-Islamic past.

The poem of the XIth century, in spite of its deficiencies, enjoyed a certain measure of popularity. A few lines from it are written on a vase of the XIVth century found at Saraitchik near the mouth of the Ural. But it seems that the author did not have



any imitators. From the XIIth century onward the preachers of Islam, in order to strengthen among the Turks the feeling of religion and observance of its rituals, began writing religious works in Turki in both prose and verse. One of these, the verses of Ahmad Iessevi remain till to day a model for the popular poets. The educated class for some time yet took its pleasure in Persian poetry, which had enjoyed patronage also at the courts of the Khans. More easily, however, the influence of Arab and Persian culture was exercised upon the Turki people that had conquered Persia and Asia Minor, and who stood, at the moment when they came to know of Islam, on a much lower rung of culture than the conquerors of Turkestan. They were apparently unhurdened by a literary past.

The victories of the Mongols afforded an impetus to the nomads to attach greater value than before to their traditions, their way of living and their language. Notwithstanding the difference between the Mongol language and the Turki and the lower level of Mongol culture in comparison with that of the Turks, the foundations of nomadic life were one and the same everywhere. Besides, the Mongol nomads that came towards the West were much less in number than the Turks and in

the lands which contained a numerous nomad population, as in Turkestan and the Golden Horde, the descendants of the Mongol conquerors soon lost the use of their language and adopted the Turki. Slightly longer did the Mongols preserve their language in Persia. During the XIVth century, after the Mongols had embraced Islam, an attempt was made to create a literature in their own tongue. Thus, the collection of Indian tales, *Kalila and Dimna*, was translated from the Persian into the Mongol language. We do not yet know whether this literature had any influence on the subsequent life of the Mongols or on their literary language. It is legitimate to suppose that the epic cycle, now so popular with the Mongols and the Kalmuks, dealing with the deeds of the *bogatir* Djaugar (perhaps from the Persian *Jehangir*, the 'Conqueror of the World') took its beginnings in Persia. In Afghanistan the descendants of the Mongols have till now preserved their language but possess no literature, not even of a popular kind. Generally speaking all that was done in Persia by the Mongol Khans for the glorification of their own people in reality served not the interests of the Mongol but of Turki national feeling. Not the Mongols but the Turkis took advantage of that brilliant picture of

nomadic life, which Rashid-ud-din gave in that portion of his work that dealt with Chinghiz Khan, his ancestors, and with other Mongol and Turki tribes. Relevant parts of Rashid-ud-din's book were on several occasions translated into Turki, one of them was done in Russia for Boris Godunov. Under Rashid-ud-din's influence the Turks gave a literary form to their own national traditions about the Turki Oguzes, a people from whom the Turki conquerors of Persia and Asia Minor traced their descent and about Oguz Khan, their mythological ancestor. One of the Turki historians of Asia Minor belonging to the XVth century in his account of Oguz Khan translated the sayings attributed by Rashid-ud-din in his work to Chinghiz Khan and boldly replaced everywhere the name of the former for that of the latter. On the literary elaboration of national traditions Persian literature also exercised influence as can be seen by the title *Oguz Nameh* given to legends about the Oguzes as sung by folk-singers.

It was natural to expect that the Turks, imbued, as they were, with fresh strength, would continue the cultural work of the Arabs and the Persians and breathe into Mussulman culture a new life. The Turks both in Asia Minor and Turkestan succeeded

in creating their own literary language and, though they followed foreign models, it was not in slavish imitation of foreign idioms or forms of thought. In Asia Minor the legends about the Arah hero Battal, who had fallen fighting for the faith at the time of the Ommeyyads were borrowed by the Turks, but the image of Battal was invested with the characteristics of an Osmanlı warrior and at sharp variance with its prototype. In the book compiled in the XVth century dealing with Korkut, the patriarch and singer of the Oguzes, similar Turki national characteristics were imposed on a whole series of borrowed personages. During the XIIIth century Asia Minor was the field of activity of the first rate Persian poet Jellal ud din the founder of the dervish order of Moulavis and, in the opinion of some scholars, the greatest of mystics. The first members of the order wrote not only in Persian but in Turki. Dervishism and mystical poetry found in Turki Asia Minor a more favourable soil for growth than in Persia and followed a different and an independent line of evolution. During the same century Turki became in Asia Minor the official tongue. Gradually a highly artificial language suited to governmental work as

well as to literature at variance with the spoken tongue and hence wholly unintelligible to the simple folk composed of numerous Arabic and Persian words but with pure Turki grammatical forms, came into being. Beside the influence of Persian literature we also notice that of Persian architecture. Buildings in the Persian style were reared at Konia and Broussa but in no spirit of slavish imitation of Persian models. In the structures of Konia, side by side with the Persian, we can distinguish the influence of local pre-Islamic traditions.

Asia Minor was conquered by the Turks from Persia and from the XI-XIIth centuries was under the power of the same dynasty which ruled over Persia. In the XIIIth century it was subjected to the supremacy of the Mongol Khans of Persia. In Turkistan, on the other hand, the relation with Persia was interrupted for a few hundred years after the fall of the dynasty of the Samanids at the end of the Xth century. As we have seen, at the beginning of the XIIIth century the Khorezmi Sultan Muhammad succeeded in uniting Turkistan and Iran under one sceptre, but his rule was so short-lived that it could not have much influenced cultural activity. Under the descen-

dants of Chengiz Khan a specific Mongol state was established in Turkestan and the relations between the Turkestan and the Persian Khans were usually of a hostile nature. Nevertheless, at this epoch, under the influence of the Persian there arose also in Turkestan a Turki literature. Turki was considered in the XIIIth century the third literary language of the Mussulman world. Jemal Karshi, who wrote in the beginning of the XIVth century, says of his older contemporary Sheikh Husam ud din Asimi, that the latter had produced excellent works "in all the three languages", his Arabic verses were marked by eloquence, the Persian verses by wit and the Turkish verses by truthfulness. Thus, at this period, as under the Caliph Mamun, the superiority of Arabic literature lay in its eloquent form, and of the Persian in its depth of thought. The newly born Turki literature grew in both these directions under the above influences but possessed a fascination of its own due to its great simplicity and sincerity.

The end of the XIVth and the beginning of the XVth centuries were for Turkestan a period of brilliance such as it had never known before. Under the rule of Timur and his descendants Turkestan and Iran were again united under one sceptre. The incursions of Timur's

troops spread much farther, to Broussa and Smyrna in the west, to Delhi in the south east and to Irish in the north. Timur's campaigns were accompanied by no fewer massacres than those of Chengbiz Khan. Cruelty of the coarsest kind was joined to a refined morbid bestiality, but Timur tried to invest his creative work with the same imposing proportions as his destructions. While tens of thousands of inhabitants of the larger towns were massacred and high towers were raised of the skulls of the dead and a multitude of people were undergoing the tortures of capital punishment imposing irrigation works were constructed and splendid buildings reared, especially at Samarkand Timur's capital, whither the conqueror sometimes forcibly brought artisans and scholars from the countries laid waste by him. The hamlets which were built round Samarkand, were called after the names of the largest towns of the Mussulman world such as, Damascus, Misr (Cairo), Shiraz and Sul tania, for, by this means, Timur wanted to proclaim the superiority of his capital over the other cities. Buildings were constructed in the Persian style but were much larger in proportions than their models. Timur insisted on this distinguishing trait and personally gave instructions to his archi-

fects, surprising them with his artistic inventiveness with which apparently the technique of the period could not always cope. The buildings of Timur's time, now for the greater part in a state of complete ruin, stood in need of repairs as early as during the XVth century. The most splendid amongst them, the cathedral-mosque of Samarkand (the so-called Mosque of Bih Khanum) was in a dangerous condition even during Timur's lifetime. At one of the Friday divine services in those days the Faithful heard with fear during their prayers the sound of crashing stones which probably fell from the cupola of the building.

Under the descendants of Timur, destruction could not compete with the pace of constructive work. Military enterprises were no longer of the same imposing kind and even the boundaries of the state had gradually become more limited. But in the chief towns animated activity was noticeable in the building of structures, especially at Samarkand and Herat. As during the former reign, but this time voluntarily, scholars, poets and artists began appearing at the royal court. The forty years (1409-1449) during which Ulughek, Timur's grandson, ruled, gave us a number of monuments the chief among them being the Medressah of Bukhara with the in-



scription "striving for knowledge is the duty of every male and *female* Mussulman, and the Medressah of Samarkand where, besides lectures on theological subjects by the scholar Kazizade Rumi, astronomy was taught. Briefer but more glorious was the work done in the observatory built by Ulughek for scientists from Persia and their pupils amongst whom the king counted himself. It was in Ulughek's name that the astronomical tables and catalogue of stars representing the last word in the astronomy of the Middle Ages and the highest point which astronomical science had reached before the invention of the telescope, were compiled and published. In his quality of a "scholar on the throne" Ulughek \* stands quite alone in the history of the Mussulman world. His contemporaries could have compared him only to the royal pupil of Aristotle. Ulughek was imbued with the idea of the progress of man independently of his religion and nationality. Thus, we see in his foreword to the astronomical tables a remarkable, though fundamentally mistaken, point of view that the study of

\* Bartold has given a brilliant picture of Ulughek's personality and times in his classical work now being translated by me called *Ulugbek i ego Vremya*—Tr

the exact sciences leads to most permanent results as they are unaffected by changes in religion, nationality and language. In reality, as is well known, the works of ancient scholars have only a historical interest whereas the writings of ancient authors still preserve all their freshness in spite of the fact that the languages in which they were written have already been long dead. Ulughek's opinion is typical of a representative of Mussulman culture who had mastered Greek science but was ignorant of Greek literature. Ali Kushchi, one of his courtiers, whom he called by the name of son, became Ulugbek's disciple, but the exact sciences found no more a favourable atmosphere for their development at Samarkand and almost immediately after the king's death his observatory was closed down. At the beginning of the XVIth century it was already in ruins. In the XXth century its remains could only be discovered by excavation. Ali Kushchi left for Persia and travelled thence to Turkey, where he had a few pupils.

For Herat the best period is considered to be the reign of Sultan Hussain (1469-1506). The inhabitants of Central Asia believed that no such town as Herat had existed in the world. This belief was based on the cultural merits of Herat rather than on its

size which was less than even that of Samarkand Sultan Hussain's reign appeared to be " a wonderful period " when every one, whatever his business, was out to achieve perfection in his work. Mir Ali Shah, a nobleman, was the patron of science and the arts. In connection with his name and that of his master are mentioned the works of the last of the great Persian poets, Jami, and of the historian Mirkhond author of a compilation of universal history which is considered even to day the most popular book of its kind in Persia.

Ulughek's possessions comprised what is now the Khanate of Bukhara, Kashgar, the Samarkand the Fergana and a large portion of the Syr Daria districts, those of Sultan Hussain were made up of Khorassan, Khorezm and part of Afghanistan. The influence of Persian culture, however, extended beyond the boundaries of these kingdoms and their eastern neighbours reared monuments in imitation of those built by Timur and the Timurids. The mosque to the south-west of Kulji, which popular tradition calls the mausoleum of Tughlak Timur \* (died at the beginning of 1360) may be assigned

\* Pantusov (n) *Gorod Almalyk* : *mazar Tughluk Timur Khana*—Town of Almalyk and the Mausoleum of

to the XIVth century. At the commencement of the XVth century was built the famous caravansarai of Tashrabat in the southern part of Semiryechia on one of the main routes leading to Kashgar. We are wholly ignorant of the date of the minaret near Tokmak in Semiryechia, which is known as 'Buran,' because we have no literary documents mentioning it nor are there any inscriptions on the building.\*

The mother tongue of Timur and his descendants was Turki hut, as far as can be judged by their works, they do not seem to have been imbued with a Turki national feeling. Nevertheless, the brilliance of their courts was made use of by their co-racials to raise the importance of the Turki language and literature. Turki poetry was imitative but the poets did not agree that their work was in any way inferior to their models; on the other hand they

Tughlak Timur Khan—*The Kaufmann Memorial Volume*, Moscow, 1910

\* On the monuments in Semiryechia see Bartold (V)

"*Otchet o poyezdke v Srednuiu Aziiu*, 1893-4"—"Report on an Expedition in Central Asia, 1893-4," St. Petersburg, 1897 (Publication of the Imperial Academy of Science, Historico-philological Section, 8th Series, Vol. I, No. 4).

believed that it was quite an adequate complement to the might of the Turki rulers. The poet Sekaki addresses the following words to Ulugbek: "The heavens yet must long complete their course before again there be born a Turki poet such as I or a scholarly king such as thou." The glory of Mir Ali Shir has eclipsed that of all his precursors and though he wrote Persian verse he was more famous as a Turki poet whose works are considered classical by all the Turki-speaking peoples from Constantinople to Tobolsk. He was also a Turki patriot and consciously attempted to prove that his language was in no way inferior to the Persian and was as capable of expressing poetical ideas. With this end in view he wrote poems in Turki on all those subjects which had become famous in Persian literature. Thus, Turki literature even in the person of its classical poet did not abandon borrowed subjects nor deal with the Turki national legends. Nevertheless his works were not merely bits broken off the mass of Persian writings. In spite of some artificiality his language was simpler, clearer and nearer to actuality than that of his models. We notice in his work that pulsation of optimistic creative energy which generally distinguished the epoch of the Timurids. Inactivity, in the words of the poet was

tantamount to death. All this applies in a greater measure to the works of Sultan Bahur (1482-1530), who had been forced under the pressure of the new conquerors, the Uzbeks, to flee from Turkestan and found for himself a new kingdom in India. Beside a few poetical works Bahur left behind him autobiographical notes which were rightly considered even in the XVIth century as classics of Turki prose. A thorough knowledge of Mussulman literature and Persian culture did not prevent him from writing simply and clearly in his mother-tongue and the fact that these qualities of his could be prized by his readers, proves the existence of a healthy literary atmosphere at the time. This is still more brought into relief when we remember the contemptuous opinion of Daulat Shah (a contemporary of Sultan Hussain) one of the best connoisseurs of Persian literature of the time, regarding the simple phraseology of Rudeki and that of the later Osmanlı authors about 'the coarse Turki language' (*Kaba' turki*) in which their ancestors had written. Apparently the demands formulated by Bahur to the authors of the age were typical not only for Timur himself but for the greater part of the society of his time and that of the Timurid epoch. He insisted

that they should write in such a way as to be appreciated by the educated and at the same time understood by the uneducated classes. Their eyes were set then upon the future and not turned towards the past. To a blind faith in the wisdom of ancestors Babur opposes a simple and clear principle. "If the father has promulgated good laws they should be preserved; if they are bad they should be replaced by good ones."

---

## CHAPTER VI

### *The Mussulman World after the XVth Century*

The XVth and the XVIth centuries were a period of brilliant success for Mussulman arms which had destroyed Byzantium and were menacing Vienna. Beside the Turkish Empire we witness the beginnings of two strong Mussulman powers, the Safavids in Persia and the so-called Grand Moguls, the descendants of Bahur in India. These centuries turned out to be fateful for the entire Islamic world. The thousand years during which the Mussulmans had occupied the first place in culture in Hither Asia had closed and Western Europe had become the bearer of the standard of progress. The facts that we have mentioned above show that this phenomenon cannot be explained only by a natural weakness due to a thousand years of cultural activity. Equally mistaken is the idea that the Arabs and the Persians had already by this time contributed all that they could and that the Turks were incapable of any creative work. Just before the decline of



ancient culture Roman writers had found that the world had floundered into a state of senility, the fecundity of the earth had ceased, mines were exhausted, population was decreasing so that one could not get a sufficient number of soldiers, sailors and agriculturists. In the Mussulman literature of the XVth century we find no such complaints for which, if we judge by the political events of the period, there could be no pretext. The Mussulman world could still dispose of an adequate amount of fresh strength and capacity for the inculcation and development of culture and yet it could not withstand competition with *Christian Europe*, where, from the XIIIth century onward, we notice a swift evolution of town life, commerce and industry and where, unlike *Hither Asia*, the struggle between the state and the classes had not become complicated by the barbarian invasion of cultured lands. To the XVth century belong those triumphs of European technique which at a later date acquired for Europe the political and cultural hegemony over the world. Gun-powder had been long known to the Far and probably to the Near East and had also perhaps been employed during warlike operations but it was in Europe that firearms were invented. Through

European artisans the new invention soon became known to their Mussulman neighbours and was largely employed by the Turka at the Siege of Constantinople. In the XVIth century the military technique of the latter was in no way inferior to that of the Europeans but to the outlying Mussulman territories the news of this invention travelled very slowly, so that, at the extreme limit of Mussulman culture, in Siberia, fire arms were unknown even during the second half of the XVIth century, a fact which very much facilitated the conquest of that country by the Russians. A still greater rôle was played by the successes attained by the Europeans in the art of shipbuilding. When, after the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, European boats penetrated into the Indian Ocean, the Mussulmans were not in a position to contend against them and had to yield to them the sea-borne trade with India and China. The Mussulmans did not get reconciled at once to this loss. During the first half of the XVIth century it was realised in Turkey what a great danger to the Mussulmans was presented by the fact of European supremacy on the seas. Steps were taken to build a fleet according to European models, in the same way as formerly the Europeans had imitated the Arabs.

It is interesting to note that in Mussulman Turkey the chief of the fleet was known by a European word, "captain" (*kapudan pasha*) whereas in all Christian Europe the word admiral, which is of Arab extraction (*amir-ul-bahr*) was being employed. Only once in 1538 the Turkish Sultan succeeded in equipping a fleet for an expedition to the coasts of India but it met with failure and the attempt was never renewed. Thanks to the achievements of European shipbuilding and the discovery of America the first place in world commerce passed from the old trade routes to the high seas. Caravan trade, to which were due the growth and prosperity of such towns as Samarkand and Herat, did not quite cease but lost its former importance.

In that same century European technique supplied civilization with a mighty invention, that of book-printing. This had long been known in China, where, in all probability, the Europeans had become acquainted with it. From China it penetrated into other Far Eastern countries. One of the peoples of this region, the Coreans, by inventing movable metallic types were in this respect the precursors of both the Chinese and Europeans. In Persia book-printing by the Chinese was already known. Rashid-ud din in his work describes it in detail.

Nevertheless the Far Eastern world did not derive from this invention the benefit which the Europeans did. The Mussulmans at that time made no use of it at all. In Europe already in the XVth century, in spite of the comparative paucity of literate people, a large number of not only literary but scientific books were printed. During the XVth century Europeans began printing for scientific purposes texts in Oriental languages. In the Mussulman world, especially in Turkey, book-printing was utilised only in the XVIIIth century. The Mussulmans had unhesitatingly borrowed fire arms from the Europeans but for the adoption of the other invention by the infidels, that of book printing, it was necessary to obtain a special resolution of theological authorities, as the employment of printed books brought about a complete revolution in school life, which was closely related to religion.

A comparison between China and Western Europe would prove best the fact that achievements in technique do not by themselves lead to progress in social life. From the example of China it can be seen that it is possible to know of gun powder and yet not create an army, to know of the compass and not engage in navigation, to know of

book-printing and yet not form public opinion. In Europe, too, the mere introduction of the printing press could not have had the results it achieved were it not for that general rise in economic and cultural life, which accompanied the Renaissance and which contributed to thrust back Mussulman culture to a secondary plane. Gradually the Mussulmans were forced to yield to the Europeans even in the study of the Mussulman languages, literature and history. In the same XVIIth century when European astronomers had taken the place of the Mussulmans in China the number of Oriental manuscripts in European libraries was so great that a French scholar, who had never travelled in the East, could compile an encyclopaedia devoted to the Mussulmans.\*

It would be absurd to maintain however, that the Islamic world after the XVth century was plunged in barbarism and did not create any more products of cultural value. Turkey of the XVI-XVIIth centuries was famous not because of her military powers only. Constantinople became for the Mussulman world one of the most important cultural centres and, for the number of Persian

\* The *Bibliothèque Orientale* of Herbelot

manuscripts preserved in its libraries it stands next only to St Petersburg and London. Cultural work of the time was not limited to the study of the monuments of the past. A new architectural style, at variance with the Persian, was founded on new principles. The buildings of the best Turkish architect of the XVIth century, Sinan (a Greek by origin), can hold their own for artistic dignity against the European creations of the Renaissance. Sinan himself considered as his best work the really splendid Mosque of Sultan Selim II (1566-1574) at Adrianople. To the XVIIth century belongs Kiatih Chelebi or Haji Halfi, who wrote, among other things, a comprehensive bibliographical work dealing with all the branches of literature and science. Of his other writings specially important is his geographical treatise, which is the first attempt to compare the data of European geographical literature with those of the Mussulmans. In Europe no such attempt had been made till that time. In that same century Aulia-Chelebi undertook and described his comprehensive travels in a work, which, though it suffers to some degree from fantasy, is in its completeness and many-sidedness of information far above the writings left by the best Arab geographers. The

beginning of the XVIIth century saw Persia under the brilliant rule of Abbas the Great (1587-1628), the memory of which is conserved in splendid buildings at Isphahan, his capital, and in other towns. According to an Italian traveller, who was contemporary to Abbas, the 'Royal Square' and the alleys of the Charhagh laid in the reign of the Shah could rival with the best squares and streets in Christian towns. The rule of the recent Kajar dynasty, too, besides strengthening the central power, helped the development of town life. Not only Teheran, the new capital, but Tehriz, which had fallen into decay in the XVIIIth century, grew into large towns. More brilliant still in the XVIIth century was the rule of the 'Grand Moguls' in India, where Persian architecture found a new direction under Indian influence. Their buildings are considered the most splendid structures of this epoch. The wealth which they had at their disposal, was far greater than the budget of the France of Louis XIV, the richest European state of the time.

Even in Turkestan, where at the beginning of the XVIth century the kingdom of the Timurids had been conquered by the savage Uzbeks, barbarism

did not gain a complete victory over culture. At Samarkand even during the XVIIth century, as is shown by the Medressehs of Shirdar and Tiliakari, the architectural traditions of the epoch of Timur and the Timurids were still alive, though at a later date the secret for preparing tiles, which were the glory of these buildings, was lost. At Bukhara during the same period there existed rich libraries, and historians of the time cited in their works the Peripatetic Philosophers and the Stoics. Commerce and town life in Khorezm were shattered by Uzbek domination but some improvements were achieved in agriculture due to the digging of broad canals. In Fergana during the XIXth century under the Kokand Khans huge irrigation works were effected and a series of new large towns were built. In those parts of Turkestan which were conquered by the Chinese, Mussulman architecture was influenced by the Chinese, and in the same way as under the Grand Moguls in India, a mixed style came into being in which not only profane structures but mosques were built.

This shows that the picture often painted of the Mussulman world as plunged 'in deep sleep' till it was 'reawoken' by the Europeans in the



XIXth century is to a great extent exaggerated. What can be affirmed is that in recent times those favourable conditions under which Mussulman culture was created, are absent. The Islamic powers of that epoch were compelled to accord the first place to military affairs and support those elements of the population in whom they found military help even at the sacrifice of cultural interests. The Osmanlı dynasty, which was quite indifferent to religion at the beginning and had been given to dervish freethinking, was forced under the stress of circumstances to renew the traditions of militant Islam. In 1593, during one of the European wars, 'the green standard of the Prophet' was taken for the first time into battle. (It was supposed to have been found at Damascus and strange to say no mention is made of its existence in any of the earlier sources.) Under these conditions the state could not but lend its support to the protagonists of religion against those of free knowledge, to warlike barbarians, such as the Albanians and the Kurds, against the agriculturists and the townspeople. The same tendencies were operative in Persia where the founder of the Safavid dynasty proclaimed Shiism to be his state religion and thereby offered a pretext

to his Sunni neighbours, the Osmanlis in the West and the Uzbeks in the East, to declare a religious war on it. From the XVIth century the struggle between the Shites and the Sunnis took a cruel turn such as had not existed during the Middle Ages. For the first time Sunnis and Shites, basing themselves on the opinions of their theologians, refused to recognise one another as Mussulmans. Militant Shiism became for Persia a sort of political Palladium. At the time of the dynastic crises of the XVIIIth century coins were sometimes inscribed with the name of the Shite Imam, who lived at the beginning of the IXth century and was buried at Meshed. Expounders of religion acquired in heterodoxical Persia much greater strength and inspired the popular masses with wilder and more excessive religious enthusiasm than in orthodox Turkey. Only India under the Grand Moguls lived under different conditions and the Islamic state in that country was superior to contemporary Europe in riches and religious toleration. The causes why even there the Mussulmans could not compete with the Europeans in cultural work are of another nature. The Empire of the Grand Moguls was a state of the Eastern Asiatic

type and disposed of such wealth that it stood little in need of contact with the outside world. English rulers of India have admitted that the agricultural productive capacity of the country was greater under the Moguls than under themselves. Their own contribution they see in the introduction and development of sea-borne commerce and the founding of such trade towns as Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, with which none of the former ports could compare.

Cultural leadership thus passed from the Mussulman peoples to the Christians. All that distinguishes contemporary life from that of the Middle Ages was created in Europe. The spread of culture now more and more followed the line from the North to the South and from the West to the East and not *vice versa*, a fact which more than anything else has had an immense importance for the history of Eastern Europe and defined the cultural task of Russia. During the Middle Ages, as in antiquity, the northern shores of the Black Sea stood in cultural and usually in political dependence on its southern shores. In the XVIIIth century on the northern shores there arose towns with which those of the southern littoral could not compare. During the Middle Ages culture was brought to

the banks of the Volga from Bukhara and Khiva. In the XIXth century the Volga Tartars, having gained knowledge through Russia of European culture, became the expounders of enlightenment amongst their co-religionists in Turkestan

---